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THE NEW YORKER

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THE NEW YORKER

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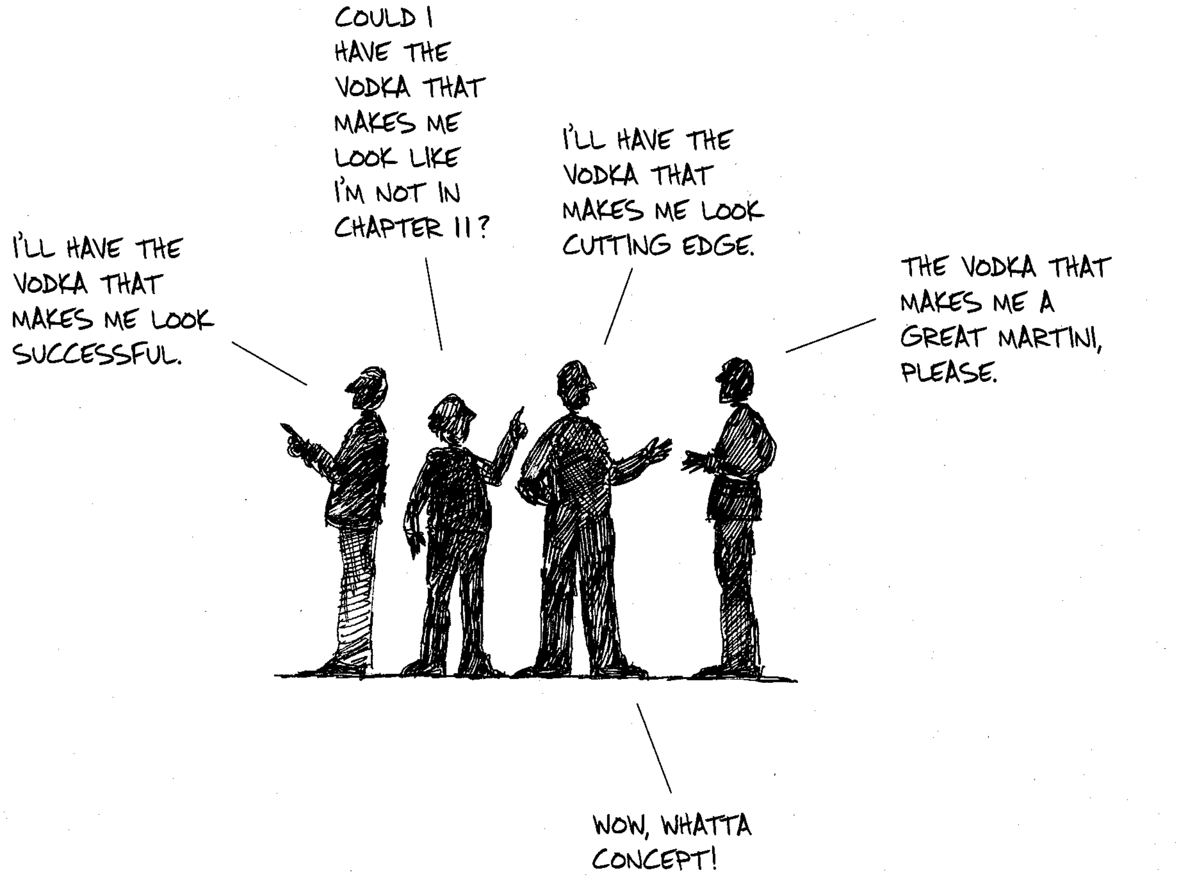
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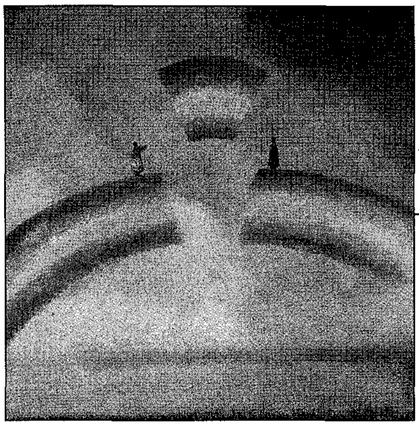

Since day one, the measure of good health care in America has been held hostage by a faulty equation: The most money buys the best care. The unfortunate legacy of the old fee-for-service system is it did a better job of raising costs than quality. ■ Can any system raise the quality of health care for Americans while controlling its costs? We believe the answer is an unqualified yes. ■ First off, the best care cannot be defined as the most expensive or the least expensive. It is the right care delivered at the right time. Ideally, it's a measure taken to prevent an illness before it ever occurs. Like an immunization, for instance. Or one that catches a disease early enough that something can be done about it. ■ That's why our women's program was the first to cover annual mammograms for all women over 40. We know what it costs, but by treating breast cancer in its earliest stages, we also know what it can save. ■ The best care can even halt the progression of chronic disease. Our congestive heart failure program provides a cardiac nurse to educate at-risk members on the importance of taking prescribed medications, and to help them make lifestyle adjustments. The result has been a significant decline in hospitalization rates and an overall improvement in patient well-being. ■ Not coincidentally, our model of prevention, early detection and chronic disease management promotes better health, with the added value of lowering health care costs. Which in turn enables companies such as ours to provide more people than ever the best choices modern medicine can offer. And do so without offering the one choice no one should ever again have to make: Their money? Or their health?

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COMMENT

MAKING NICE

Why politics means always having to say you're sorry.

PRESIDENT CLINTON'S recent apology, during his trip to Africa, for American participation in the slave trade caps a lively season for contrition. Since last summer, the Internal Revenue Service has apologized to American taxpayers for having a hostile attitude; the makers of "Air Force One" have apologized to Kazakhstan for the unflattering manner in which citizens of that nation were portrayed in the movie; the journalist David Brock has apologized to President Clinton for his "Troopergate" article in *The American Spectator*, back in 1993; the Japanese (who have fifty ways of saying "I'm sorry") have apologized for their treatment of British prisoners during the Second World War; the government of Britain has apologized for being "insensitive" to Nazi victims whose assets it had seized during the war; the Vatican has apologized (or, more accurately, repented) for the behavior of Catholics during the Holocaust; a French newspaper has apologized for its position on the Dreyfus Affair; and Britain's Prime Minister Tony Blair has apologized for the Irish potato famine, which took place a hundred years before he was born. The only person who can't seem to get an apology is Paula Jones.

A high volume of any commodity tends to lower the value of individual items (with the possible exception of Beanie Babies), and in the current glut new would-be apologists run the risk of receiving the response that the philosopher Sidney Morgenbesser once identified as a rare case of two positives making a negative: Yeah, yeah. There are certainly plenty of recent apologies for which genuine remorse was pretty clearly not the principal motivation. "I'm sorry if she felt she was harmed," said Marv Albert as he faced sentencing after his conviction for sexual assault (to wit: biting). This apology received low marks for both technical merit and artistic impression. So did Mike Tyson's apology for performing a similar act of love on Evander Holyfield's right ear during their title fight last summer and Latrell Sprewell's apology for attempting to strangle his basketball coach this winter. In these cases, people felt, the apologizer just regarded repentance as the lesser of two evils, the greater one being either a big fine or time in jail.

And there is something a little suspect about expressions of regret—such as Tony Blair's about the potato famine—for the failed policies of someone else.

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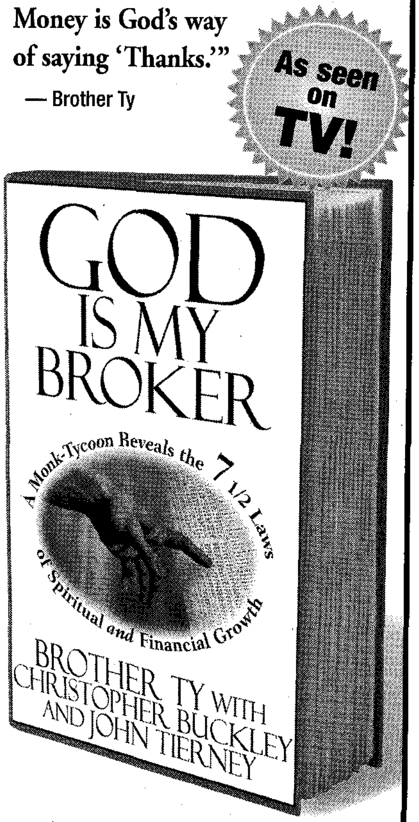
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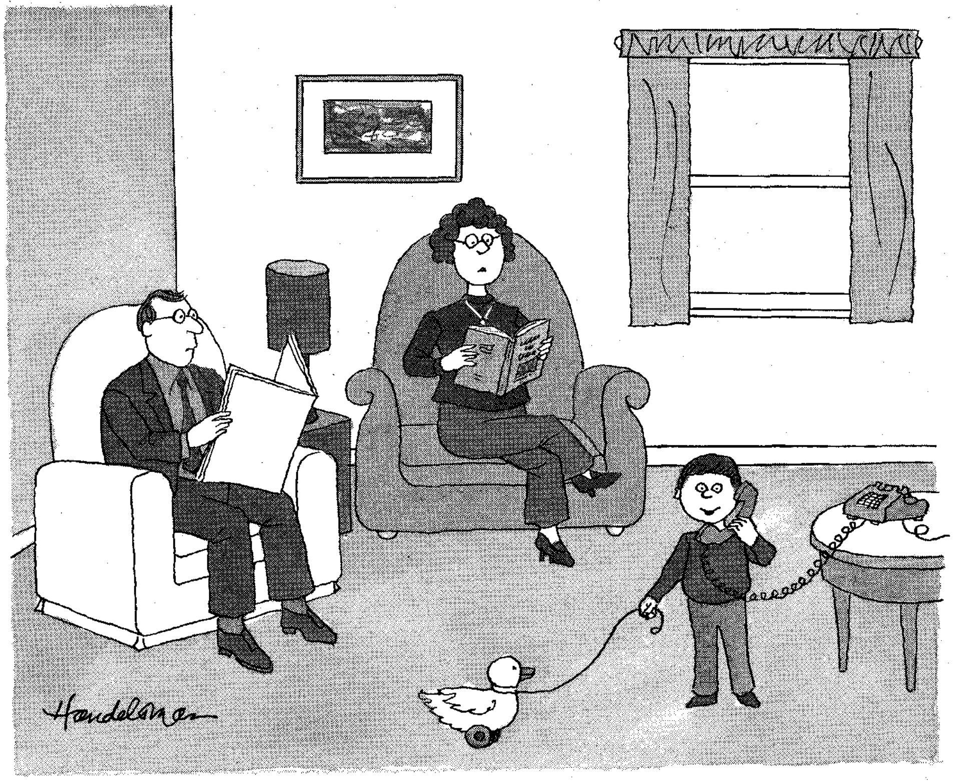


"Tell Mr. Yeltsin I'd be delighted. Minister of what?"

• •

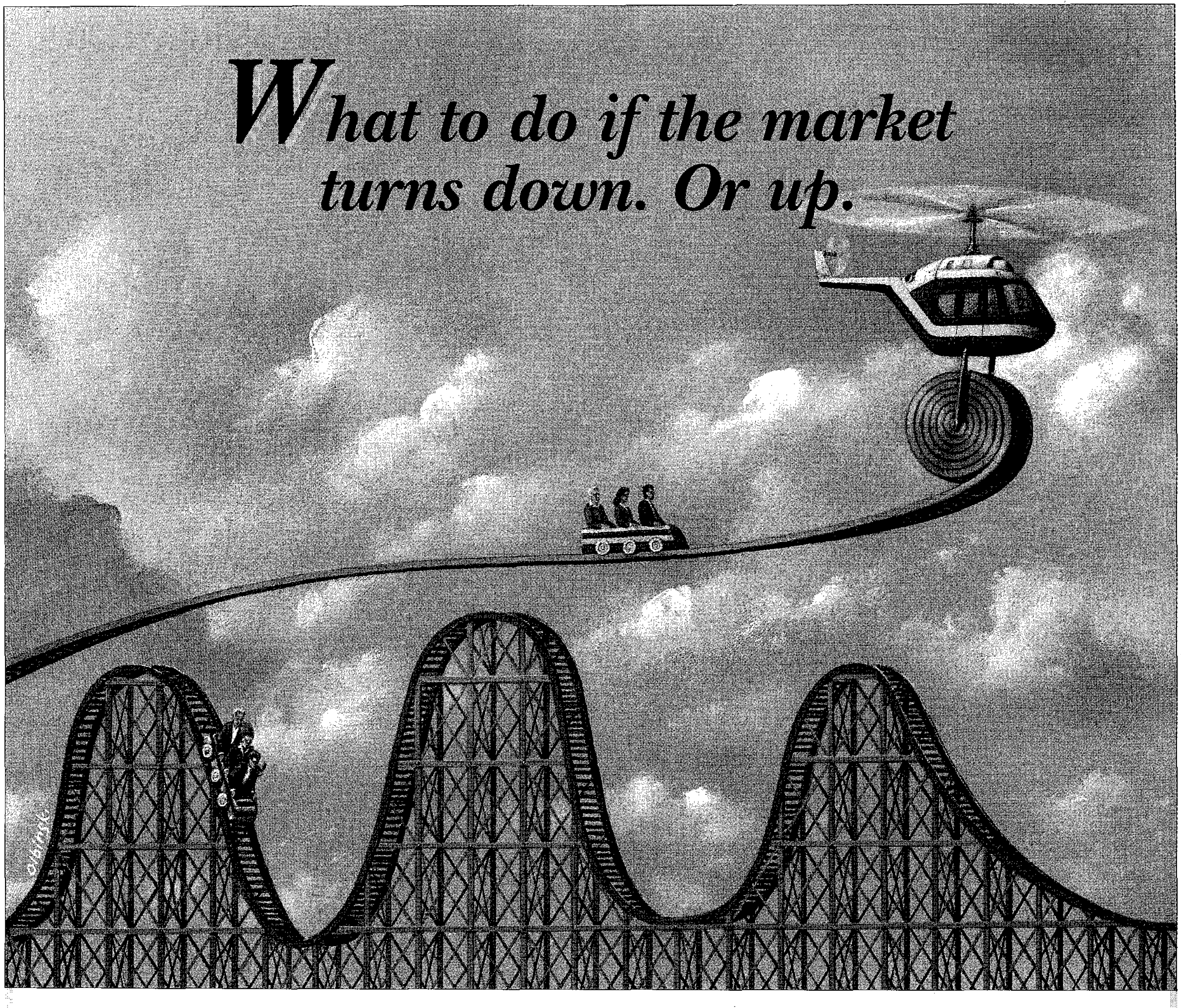
Mayor Rudolph Giuliani recently announced that the City of New York would apologize for its handling of the riot in Crown Heights in which Yankel Rosenbaum was murdered. Since the riot took place in 1991, when David Dinkins was mayor, this seemed less a concession than a political point scored against an old opponent. That reading was not lost on Mr. Dinkins, who objected to the aspersion being cast on his record. Mayor Giuliani, as every New Yorker knows, has lately assumed the mantle of civility crusader, and he was quick to address Mr. Dinkins's concern. "I would suggest he just keep his mouth shut," he explained.

Still, it's hard not to feel that the acknowledgment of mistakes is a good thing. It gives moral satisfaction to people who are owed it—the victims or the victims' heirs—because it establishes before the world that their grievances were not invented. It is not a substitute for material redress, but it may make material redress easier to gain down the road. Sometimes, as in the Paula Jones case, where the alleged damage was to reputation, an apology would itself have constituted a form of redress. And the act of apologizing can offer an end to a lot of increasingly attenuated self-justification. After President Clinton's apology, in Uganda, for American involvement in the slave trade, Representative Tom DeLay was indignant. "He didn't quite apologize for the chieftains in Uganda that were selling the blacks to the slave traders, did he?" the congressman complained to reporters. "Heh. He didn't talk about what's-his-name, Idi Amin, that killed five hundred thousand people in Uganda. He didn't apologize for that." Apologizing for Idi Amin would have been a stretch even for a man as morally expansive as President Clinton. But Representative DeLay's argument was plain, and it was the usual ugly argument, which is that the victims were somehow complicit in their own victimhood. "He made me do it" is the way kids in the playground put it, and no parent accepts that as a mitigating circumstance.

WHATEVER the merits of his views on the slave trade, Representative DeLay seems dangerously out of touch with the contemporary mood, which is distinctly pro-niceness. Mr. DeLay's leader, Newt Gingrich, who is said to nurse Presidential ambitions, has already repositioned himself as a nice person; New York's Senator Alfonse D'Amato, who is up for reëlection next fall, is busy right now turning himself into a tree-hugger. Kenneth Starr is extremely unpopular in part because he is perceived as mean. Tyson, once the idol of heavyweight-boxing fans because of his ferocity, has dropped almost out of sight into the netherworld of pro wrestling; Evander Holyfield, who was considered boring five years ago because he was too nice, is a hero now. Dole lost; Clinton won. Michael Milken and T. Boone Pickens, Jr., are out; Warren Buffett and George Soros are in. Leno has overtaken Letterman.

Did human character change? It seems unlikely. Niceness, after all, is not the same as goodness. It's not even the same as sincerity. It names a superficial quality, an affect. Michael Jordan and Tiger Woods are admired for being nice. They *are* nice. But do you really think they like you? Public approval of President Clinton for being, essentially, nice is accompanied by a general acknowledgment that he is probably not a good person. It's an indication of how accustomed to aggressiveness Americans have become over the last ten years that even the shallowest niceness is welcome.

Some of the official apologies for ancient commissions and omissions seem to many people to have this slightly glib quality. No doubt in each case there is as much calculation as compassion: a constituency is being stroked or a more favorable relationship is being sought. But the whole effort by large entities like nations and churches to dissociate themselves from the past has a distinctively premillennial air about it. The Vatican mentions the millennium in the opening sentence of its statement on the Holocaust, as though the date alone provided a reason for addressing the issue. And the dismissal last week of Paula Jones's lawsuit brought a collective sigh of relief. The only thing better than an apology for putting the past to rest is the discovery that there is nothing to apologize for. Let's start the next thousand years with a clean slate—that seems to be the general sentiment. Sounds nice. —LOUIS MENAND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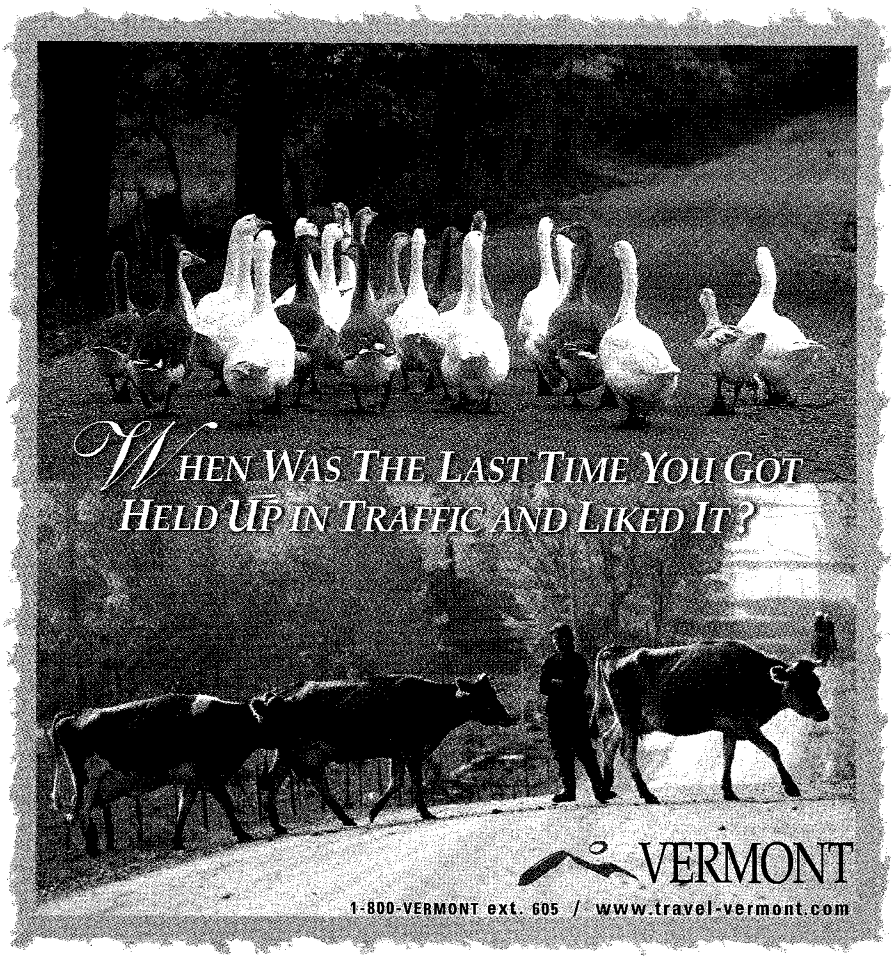
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THE MAIL

ART FORUM

Adam Gopnik's review of the new biography of the art critic Clement Greenberg (A Critic at Large, March 16th) repeats arrant gossip about me. Whatever Greenberg told others, he never beat me up. I was on the boxing squad at the University of North Carolina, and when Clem got tired of swinging at me without any satisfactory result he called the bout off, saying, "I've got fifty pounds on you, so this isn't fair!" Also, though I did help André Breton get out the first issue of *Triple V*, the magazine he started in New York, I never had a reputation as a Surrealist, and never tried to get one by setting my hair on fire. And neither I nor Harold Rosenberg was responsible for the *Partisan Review's* turn toward Trotskyism, although I did welcome it. Rosenberg even refused at first to collaborate with the *Review* when it so turned—I think out of fear of antagonizing the Communist Party, then powerful in publishing.

LIONEL ABEL
New York City

If Mr. Gopnik chooses to use a book review to skewer Clement Greenberg's work as a critic and a writer, that I must accept. However, if Gopnik chooses to claim in his review that Greenberg was a neglectful father, that I must refute. Clement Greenberg was a doting father to me all my life, and I am proud that my four-month-old daughter, Clementine, bears his name.

SARAH GREENBERG MORSE
New York City

I watched Clement Greenberg apply his critical method in the early nineteen-seventies, when I was teaching art at Bennington. During a presentation of canvases by graduating seniors, Greenberg was rigorously consistent in his comments, suggesting to each student that if he "cropped" a few inches off his painting's left or right side (or perhaps top or bottom) he would have a "nice picture." No wonder modern abstract painting is continually declared dead: the most influential critic of his time kept cutting away the challenging parts of paintings until the only thing left was bland wallpaper.

PHILIP WOFFORD
Hoosick Falls, N.Y.

RESPECTABLE GUERRILLAS

We may judge Ted Kaczynski to be crazy, and maybe he is ("Defending the Unabomber," by William Finnegan, March 16th), but if he had joined a revolutionary group and, like Che Guevara or Vladimir Lenin or Menachem Begin, had gained the power to enforce his views without fear of retribution, his acts would have been deemed justifiable and he would probably have died a hero.

KENNETH L. ZIMMERMAN
Huntington Beach, Calif.

UNEQUAL EXONERATION

I want to set the record straight on one point raised in Larissa MacFarquhar's review of my book, "When She Was Bad" (Books, March 9th). I am opposed to capital punishment. I do not, therefore, believe that any inmate, including Guinevere Garcia, should be "expeditiously put to death." What I do believe is that the manner in which we exonerate female death-row inmates is worthy of comment. Garcia, for instance, is a strong, sane, intelligent woman who was recast by her rescuers as a mentally deranged, infantile battered woman when they sought a sentence commutation in 1996. That placed Garcia in the curious position of having to argue in favor of her own moral agency in front of Illinois's prisoner-review board. This conflict between a potent female stereotype and a flesh-and-blood woman is what I found striking.

PATRICIA PEARSON
Toronto, Ontario

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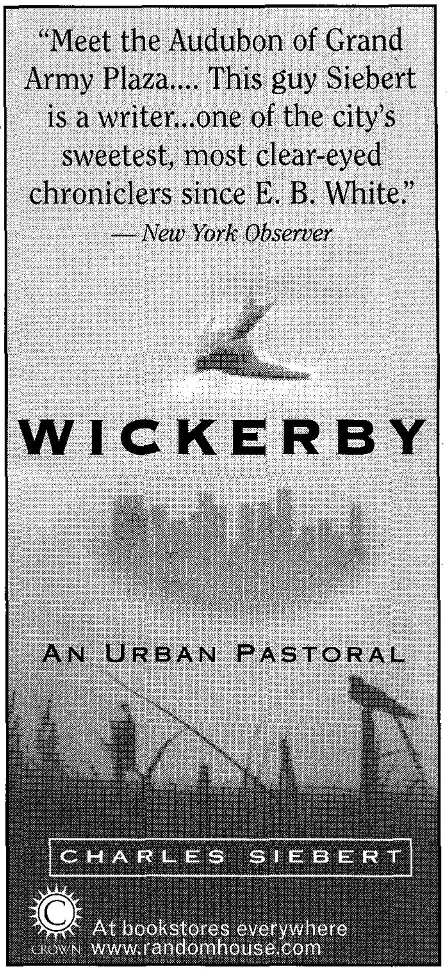

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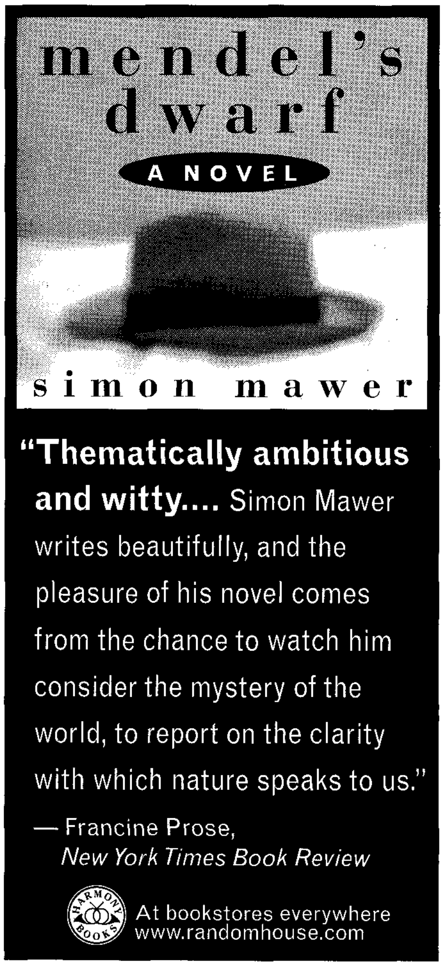

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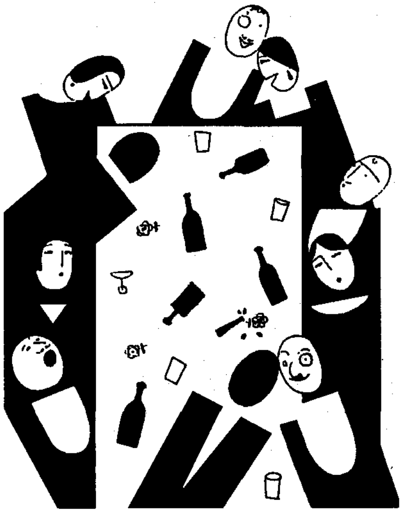

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THE THEATRE

OPENINGS AND PREVIEWS

(Please call the phone number listed with the theatre for timetables and ticket information.)

Bad Sex with Bud Kemp—A one-woman show about single life in New York, written and performed by Sandra Tsing Loh. In previews. (Second Stage, Broadway at 76th St. 787-3392.)

From Above—In Tom Donaghy's new play, a young woman in mourning is visited by a man who claims to be her dead husband. David Warren is the director. In previews. (Playwrights Horizons, 416 W. 42nd St. 279-4200.)

The Herbal Bed—Shakespeare's daughter is put on trial for adultery, in a drama by Peter Whelan. Michael Attenborough is the director. In previews. (Eugene O'Neill, 230 W. 49th St. 239-6200.)

High Society—Melissa Errico and Daniel McDonald lead the cast in a new musical based on Philip Barry's play "The Philadelphia Story." The songs are by Cole Porter. The book is by Arthur Kopit. Christopher Renshaw is the director. In previews. (St. James, 246 W. 44th St. 239-6200.)

Honour—The life of a middle-aged poet (Jane Alexander) is turned upside down when a young journalist (Laura Linney) arrives to interview her writer husband (Robert Foxworth), in a drama by the Australian playwright Joanna Murray-Smith. Gerald Gutierrez is the director. In previews. (Belasco, 111 W. 44th St. 239-6200.)

Miss Julie—Strindberg's tragedy is the Pearl Theatre Company's final production for the season. In previews. (80 St. Marks Place. 598-9802.)

Othello—Sam Mendes's Royal National Theatre staging of Shakespeare's tragedy. April 8-10 at 7:30, April 11 at 2 and 7:30, and April 12 at 3. (BAM's Majestic Theatre, 651 Fulton St., Brooklyn. 718-636-4100.)

The Physicists—The Swiss dramatist Friedrich Dürrenmatt's 1962 comedy gets an update by the Company Presents. Previews April 11-12. Opens April 13 at 8. (46 Walker Street Theatre, 46 Walker St. 636-9348.)

Quidam—A new show from Cirque du Soleil. Performances begin April 8. (The big top at Battery Park City. For more information, call 800-678-5440.)

Too Jewish Two—Avi Hoffman's salute to the original Borscht Belt comics, a sequel to "Too Jewish?" In previews. (Playhouse 91, at 316 E. 91st St. 831-2000.)

OPENED RECENTLY

Ah, Wilderness!—A Lincoln Center Theatre revival of Eugene O'Neill's comedy, set on Independence Day in 1906. (Vivian Beaumont. 239-6200.)

Amazing Grace—In this new drama by Michael Cristofer, Marsha Mason is eerily believable as an oblivious murderess who finds God on death row in North Carolina. What's hard to believe is that Cristofer thought it might be fresh to reheat the old Southern sinner-salvation-faith-healing-crucifixion stew that's so often served up in death-penalty dramas. The talented cast makes do. (Theatre Four, 424 W. 55th St. 239-6200. Closes April 19.)

Anadarko—The MCC Theatre presents a drama set in an Oklahoma jail, by Tim Blake Nelson. Doug Hughes is the director. (120 W. 28th St. 727-7765. Closes April 18.)

Art—Yasmina Reza's farce is a splendid vehicle for three masterly actors, Victor Garber, Alan Alda, and Alfred Molina. They portray friends whose fifteen-year relationship is threatened when one of them buys a large white canvas for two hundred thousand francs. Elegantly translated, from the French, by Christopher Hampton. Directed by Matthew Warchus. (Reviewed in our issue of 3/23/98.) (Royale, 242 W. 45th St. 239-6200.)

The Beauty Queen of Leenane—The precocious Anglo-Irish playwright Martin McDonagh's riveting winter's tale, set in a rural Irish cottage, about an aged mother (the stolid and sensational Anna Manahan) and her virgin forty-year-old daughter (the pale and poignant Marie Mullen), who is trapped in a punishing solitude. It's a simple, primitive story, yet it is filled with complex emotional surprises and reversals. The show reopens at the Walter Kerr on April 14. (3/16/98) (219 W. 48th St. 239-6200.)

Blithedale: A Virtual Utopia—Tim Maner's final work in a trilogy of plays based on Hawthorne. Wednesdays through Sundays at 8. (HERE, 145 Sixth Ave., near Spring St. 647-0202. Closes April 18.)

Cabaret—This mesmerizing production of the Kander and Ebb musical doesn't have the high-gloss veneer of the celebrated movie version; here, the dancers at the Kit Kat Klub, the symbol of anything-goes Weimar Germany, look shell-shocked and stigmatized, and go through their paces in torn stockings. As the Emcee (the Joel Grey role), Alan Cumming is astonishing—with his bruised-looking body, his huge, knowing eyes, and his satanic energy, he's a spectacle of mixed messages. Natasha Richardson, as Sally Bowles, the role that made Liza Minnelli a star, casts a spectral glow. Everything in this show, the brainchild of the director Sam Mendes, seems to ask the audience to what extent we are participating in—perhaps collaborating in—the events unfolding before our eyes. (4/6/98) (Kit Kat Klub, 124 W. 43rd St. 719-1300.)

The Chairs—From London, a Théâtre de Complicité/Royal Court Theatre production of Ionesco's tragic farce. Directed by Simon McBurney. (Reviewed in this issue.) (Golden, 252 W. 45th St. 239-6200.)

The Cripple of Inishmaan—Jerry Zaks directs a play by Martin McDonagh, in which an island community off the coast of Ireland is visited by a Hollywood producer. (Public, 425 Lafayette St. 260-2400.)

The Deep Blue Sea—Blythe Danner and Edward Herrmann star in a revival of Terence Rattigan's 1952 drama. (Roundabout, Broadway at 45th St. 719-1300.)

The Diary of Anne Frank—Theatrically, this reworking of the 1955 play by Frances Goodrich and Albert Hackett, under the direction of James Lapine, is generally fine. But the play's dogged realism is its fundamental flaw: we can't really re-create for ourselves what her dreadful situation was like. (12/15/97) (Music Box, 239 W. 45th St. 239-6200.)

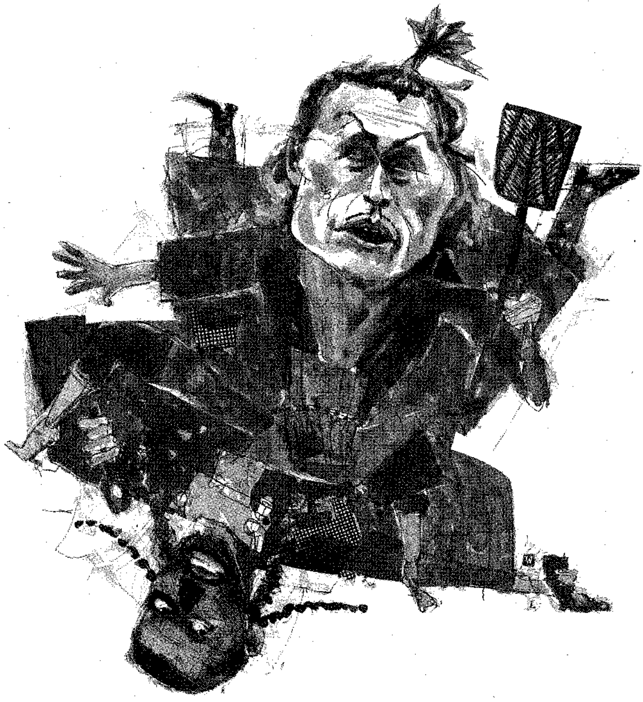
Dinah Was—Oliver Goldstick's play about the late singer Dinah Washington (Yvette Freeman) trots out every blues-queen cliché in the book, and knowing that Washington helped create the clichés doesn't make things any better. But never mind: Freeman's powerful performance and evocative singing, and the general high spirits, make this a memorable evening. Directed by David Petrarca. (WPA Theatre, 519 W. 23rd St. 206-0523. Closes April 26.)

Dress to Kill—The British comic Eddie Izzard returns to town with a new show. (Westbeth Theatre Center, 151 Bank St. 741-0391.)

The Emperor Jones—The Wooster Group's staging of O'Neill's early drama. (Performing Garage, 33 Wooster St. 966-3651. Closes April 26.)

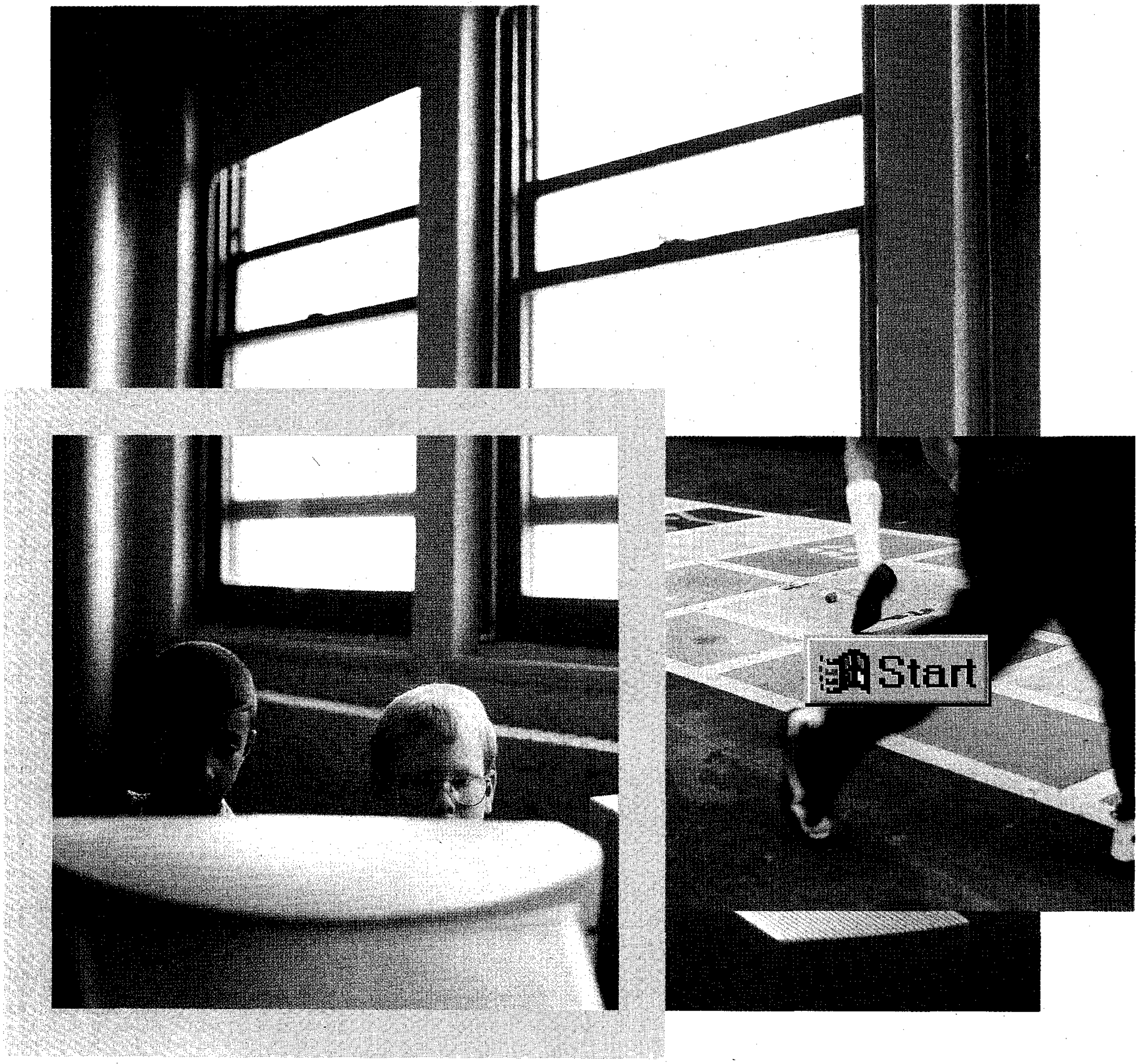
A Flea in Her Ear—Bill Irwin's production of Georges Feydeau's 1907 farce can't live up to the fun of the script, which has been deftly and wittily co-adapted by Jean-Marie Besset and Mark O'Donnell. Part of the problem is the casting: the ensemble is quite young, and as a group the actors lack both the years and the swank necessary to carry off the vainglory for which the author punishes them. (3/23/98) (Laura Pels, Broadway at 45th St. 719-1300.)

Freak—In his "pseudo-autobiographical" one-man show about growing up in New York, John Leguizamo takes the audience on a very funny breakneck jaunt down distorted-memory lane, beginning with the moment his parents conceived him, in Colombia. ("We left during that great plantain famine of the late sixties," he says.) He's a small guy, but his



Kate Valk and Willem Dafoe, in "The Emperor Jones."

WARREN LINN



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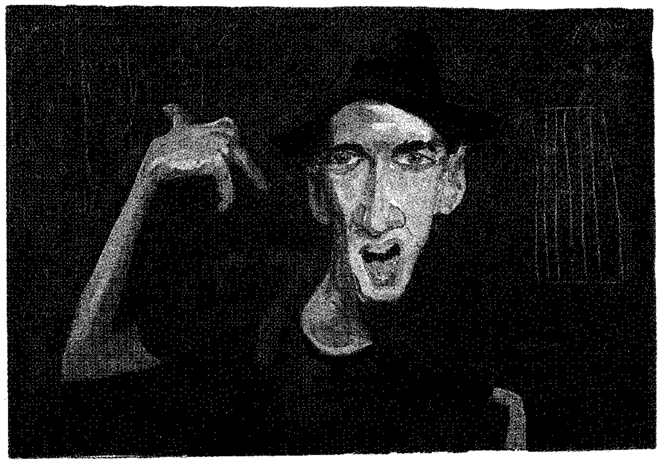
seemingly boneless body and boundless humor fill the large stage, and he absolutely charms, from start to finish. Directed by David Bar Katz. (Cort, 138 W. 48th St. 239-6200.)

Golden Child—David Henry Hwang's drama about a Chinese businessman struggling with the evolution of cultural traditions. James Lapine is the director. (Longacre, 220 W. 48th St. 239-6200.)

Hedwig and the Angry Inch—Hedwig, as written and portrayed by John Cameron Mitchell, is a sweet transsexual singer from East Berlin, whose cabaret performance cum stadium act becomes a smart, funny, and very moving exploration of the redemptive, if perhaps fleeting, power of love. (Jane Street Theatre, Hotel Riverview Ballroom, 113 Jane St. 239-6200.)



Danny Hoch, in "Jails, Hospitals & Hip-Hop."

Hot Klezmer—A celebration of wedding music of the shtetl. (American Jewish Theatre, 307 W. 26th St. 633-9797.)

I Am My Own Cheap Thrill—It's a man's world, and Amanda Vogel has something to say about it in her one-woman show. Thursdays through Saturdays at 10:30. (HERE, 145 Sixth Ave., near Spring St. 647-0202.)

I Don't Know Who He Was and I Don't Know What He Said—The playwright Mac Wellman directs his one-man monologue—a rant by a Wall Street flimflam man—performed by Matthew Maguire. Fridays and Saturdays at 10. (Dixon Place, 258 Bowery, near Houston St. 219-3088.)

Jails, Hospitals & Hip-Hop—Danny Hoch's new one-man show is a series of short monologues by characters concerned with at least one of the above. Mr. Hoch's versatility is astonishing, and at its best the show is a smart, perceptive, and very funny look into the marginal worlds of his characters. But some segments fall flat and others go on too long; on the whole, the evening should have been honed to a finer edge. (P.S. 122, 150 First Ave., at 9th St. 477-5288.)

Joseph Gabriel Magic '98—Mr. Gabriel comes to New York by way of Las Vegas. (Lamb's, 130 W. 44th St. 239-6200.)

Laguna Beach—A late-night comic soap opera, written by David Latham and performed by a cast of downtown types. Saturdays at midnight. (HERE, 145 Sixth Ave., near Spring St. 647-0202.)

The Lion King—The director Julie Taymor's theatrical event is far more textured and original than the animated film; it's like being in a dream awake. The show's high visual style, however, is in sharp contrast to its low verbal one. (11/24/97) (New Amsterdam, 214 W. 42nd St. 307-4100.)

Long Day's Journey Into Night—An Irish Rep staging of O'Neill's drama. With Frances Sternhagen and Brian Murray. (132 W. 22nd St. 727-2737.)

Marc Salem's Mindgames—The clairvoyant's fascinating "tricks" seem like magic, and at times you feel like you're the only person in the audience who isn't a plant. (Westside, 407 W. 43rd St. 239-6200.)

Mizlansky/Zilinsky; or, Schmucks—Davis Mizlansky, played with terrific gusto by Nathan Lane, is a has-been producer trying to float one last get-rich scheme—the sale of a dubious tax shelter—with his urbane partner and erstwhile best friend, Sam Zilinsky (the droll Lewis J. Stadlen), whom he woos, hilariously, into the disastrous scam. Jon Robin Baitz based this high-spirited comedy on his experiences working as a gofer for a two-bit producer in the mid-eighties. Aided by Joe Mantello's elegant direction, he creates a potent atmosphere of affection and regret which is the play's charm. (3/16/98) (Manhattan Theatre Club, at City Center, 131 W. 55th St. 581-1212. Closes April 26.)

The Mystery of the Rose Bouquet—A psychological thriller by Manuel Puig, presented by INTAR. (420 W. 42nd St. 695-6135. Closes April 12.)

Mystery School—Tyne Daly stars in Paul Selig's new one-woman play, a collection of monologues by five characters in various states of spiritual fulfillment, ranging from an unwavering Christian fundamentalist to an alcoholic desperately seeking somthing to believe in. Though the idea has the potential to be deadly earnest, the show is, for the most part, funny and thought-provoking; Ms. Daly and Mr. Selig create a group of recognizable characters, whose seemingly disparate insights (and lack thereof) turn out to be complementary. Staged in a decrepit synagogue that makes an ideal backdrop, especially as lighted by Michael Chybowski. Smoothly directed by Doug Hughes. (Angel Orensanz Foundation Center for the Arts, 172 Norfolk St., at E. Houston St. 239-6200. Closes April 19.)

Never the Sinner—John Logan's 1985 play about Leopold and Loeb, the teen-age millionaires who murdered a child in Chicago in 1924, sweeps the audience into the boys' twisted friendship without losing sight of the sheer brutality of their "crime of the century"—a balancing act that Mr. Logan and the director, Ethan McSweeny, bring off seamlessly. Jason Patrick Bowcutt and Michael Solomon are utterly convincing as the killers. (John Houseman, 450 W. 42nd St. 239-6200.)

The Old Neighborhood—David Mamet's three elegant, autobiographical one-act plays are serious, beautiful, and short—an almost impossible feat these days on Broadway. (Booth, 222 W. 45th St. 239-6200.)

Paul McKenna's Hypnotic World—The British-television mesmerizer, on Broadway. Sundays and Mondays through April 20. (Roundabout, Broadway at 45th St. 307-4100.)

Ragtime—E. L. Doctorow's epic novel is transformed into a historical pageant. It's a big, brave, passionate gamble, masterfully directed by Frank Galati. (2/2/98) (Ford Center for the Performing Arts, 213 W. 42nd St. 307-4100.)

R & J—A promising, if not exactly new, idea—schoolboys escape regimentation and discover their own passion by performing "Romeo and Juliet"—yields a few gripping moments surrounded by a lot of overheated panting, shouting, and foot-stomping. (John Houseman, 450 W. 42nd St. 354-2220.)

St. Nicholas—Brian Cox portrays a drama critic having a breakdown, in Conor McPherson's 1997 play. (Primary Stages, 354 W. 45th St. 333-4052. Closes April 25.)

Saturn Returns: A Concert—The composer Adam Guettel and the director Tina Landau, who collaborated on the 1996 musical "Floyd Collins," have joined forces again for this song cycle. (Reviewed in this issue.) (Public, 425 Lafayette St. 260-2400. Closes April 26.)

The Scarlet Pimpernel—This new musical, based on the Baroness Orczy novel, has a lot going for it (if you don't count the music and lyrics, which are dreadful): its charismatic star, Douglas Sills, Andrew Jackness's sets, and Jane Greenwood's costumes. Peter Hunt directed. (Minskoff, 45th St. west of Broadway. 307-4100.)

Secrets Every Smart Traveler Should Know—In this revue inspired by a Fodor's travel guide, the best songs are the ones that manage to be goofy and savvy at the same time. The show hits turbulence, though, when the humor trades on international stereotypes. (Triad, 158 W. 72nd St. 799-4599.)

Shopping and Fucking—A small, sketchy piece of British boulevard nihilism, by the first-time playwright Mark Ravenhill, which attempts to dramatize capitalism's warping effects. (2/16/98) (New York Theatre Workshop, 79 E. 4th St. 460-5475. Closes April 11.)

Side Man—Warren Leight's new play is a nostalgic but never sappy paean to the musical obsessiveness and worldly indifference of mid-century big-band musicians. Though it gives short shrift to the characters, the play invites the audience into the musicians' world, and the cast is good enough to make it come alive. Solidly directed by Michael Mayer. (Classic Stage Company, 136 E. 13th St. 279-4200. Closes April 10.)

The Sound of Music—The Rodgers and Hammerstein favorite is back, in live, non-VHS form. Rebecca Luker is enormously winning as Maria, and the seven children in the cast are mostly delightful. The one piece of unfortunate casting is Michael Siberry, who makes a lightweight, antimagnetic Georg von Trapp. This musical has the inexorable pull of a fairy tale: children are riveted by it, and adults may find themselves weeping whether they like it or not. Still, the production doesn't linger in the memory; there may be music in those hills, but the producers didn't seem to find a whole lot of fresh air up there. Susan H. Schulman is the director. (4/6/98) (Martin Beck, 302 W. 45th St. 239-6200.)

The Summer in Gossensass—Maria Irene Fornés's new drama, about two actresses responsible for the first London staging of Ibsen's "Hedda Gabler." (Judith Anderson, 422 W. 42nd St. 279-4200. Closes April 26.)

The Sunshine Boys—A revival of Neil Simon's comedy about two irascible old vaudevillians, starring Ye Olde Odd Couple of television, Tony Randall and Jack Klugman. The sandpapery friction that the twosome showed on TV is now reduced to lovability. (Lyceum, 149 W. 45th St. 239-6200.)

The 1001 Nights of Penny Arcade—The performance artist's new show examines the gentrification of the Lower East Side. Thursdays at 10. (House of Candles Theatre, 99 Stanton St., at Ludlow St. 420-1466.)

Two Pianos, Four Hands—With the Canadian keyboardists Ted Dykstra and Richard Greenblatt. (Variety Arts, Third Ave. at 14th St. 239-6200.)

Upstate—Jonathan Slaff portrays a playwright who retreats to the country to complete a children's play, in a comedy by Crystal Field. (Theatre for the New City, 155 First Ave., at 10th St. 254-1109. Closes April 12.)

A View from the Bridge—The Roundabout Theatre's excellent revival of Arthur Miller's tragic story of the longshoreman Eddie Carbone and his obsession with his orphaned niece. (1/5/98) (Neil Simon, 250 W. 52nd St. 307-4100.)

Visiting Mr. Green—Eli Wallach finds great dignity in the title character, an eighty-six-year-old Jewish widower, in Jeff Baron's sweet if predictable Upper West Side comedy. (Union Square Theatre, 100 E. 17th St. 505-0700.)

WAIT UNTIL DARK—Marisa Tomei and Quentin Tarantino star in a revival of Frederick Knott's 1966 suspense drama. Leonard Foglia is the director. (Brooks Atkinson, 256 W. 47th St. 307-4100.)

LONG RUNS

AS BEES IN HONEY DROWN: Lucille Lortel, 121 Christopher St. 239-6200. . . . **BEAUTY AND THE BEAST:** Palace, Broadway at 47th St. 307-4100. . . . **BLUE MAN GROUP/TUBES:** Astor Place Theatre, 434 Lafayette St. 254-4370. . . . **BRING IN DA NOISE, BRING IN DA FUNK:** Ambassador, 219 W. 49th St. 239-6200. . . . **CATS:** Winter Garden, Broadway at 50th St. 239-6200. . . . **CHICAGO:** Shubert, 225 W. 44th St. 239-6200. . . . **THE FANTASTICKS:** Sullivan Street Playhouse, 181 Sullivan St., at Bleecker St. 674-3838. . . . **FORBIDDEN BROADWAY STRIKES BACK!:** Stardust, Broadway at 51st St. 239-6200. . . . **GRANDMA SYLVIA'S FUNERAL:** SoHo Playhouse, 15 Vandam St. 691-1555. . . . **GROSS INDECENCY: THE THREE TRIALS OF OSCAR WILDE:** Minetta Lane Theatre, 18 Minetta Lane, east of Sixth Ave., between W. 3rd and Bleecker Sts. 420-8000. . . . **HOWARD CRABTREE'S WHEN PIGS FLY:** Douglas Fairbanks, 432 W. 42nd St. 239-6200. . . . **HOW I LEARNED TO DRIVE:** Century, 111 E. 15th St. 239-6200. . . . **I LOVE YOU, YOU'RE PERFECT, NOW CHANGE:** Westside, 407 W. 43rd St. 239-6200. . . . **JEKYLL & HYDE:** Plymouth, 236 W. 45th St. 239-6200. . . . **THE LAST NIGHT OF BALLYHOO:** Helen Hayes, 240 W. 44th St. 239-6200. . . . **LATE NITE CATECHISM:** St. Luke's Church, 308 W. 46th St. 279-4200. . . . **THE LIFE:** Ethel Barrymore, 243 W. 47th St. 239-6200. . . . **LES MISÉRABLES:** Imperial, 249 W. 45th St. 239-6200. . . . **MISS SAIGON:** Broadway Theatre, Broadway at 53rd St. 239-6200. . . . **PERFECT CRIME:** Duffy,1553 Broadway, at 46th St. 695-3401. . . . **THE PHANTOM OF THE OPERA:** Majestic, 245 W. 44th St. 239-6200. . . . **RENT:** Nederlander, 208 W. 41st St. 921-8000. . . . **1776:** Gershwin, 51st St. west of Broadway. 307-4100. . . . **SMOKEY JOE'S CAFÉ:** Virginia, 245 W. 52nd St. 239-6200. . . . **STOMP:** Orpheum, 126 Second Ave., at St. Marks Pl. 477-2477. . . . **TITANIC:** Lunt-Fontanne, 205 W. 46th St. 307-4100. . . . **TONY N' TINA'S WEDDING:** St. John's Church, 81 Christopher St. 239-6200.

DANCE

EIFMAN BALLET OF ST. PETERSBURG—The twenty-one-year-old company débuts in this hemisphere with two full-length works, "Red Giselle," based on the peregrinations of the prima ballerina Olga Spessivtseva, who defected from Russia to dance with the Ballets Russes, and "Tchaikovsky," which makes a story-ballet of the composer's life. (City Center, 131 W. 55th St. 581-1212. April 8-11 at 8 and April 12 at 2 and 6.)

ELIOT FELD'S BALLET TECH—April 8 and April 10 at 8: "Umbra Rumba," "The Last Sonata," "Yo, Shakespeare," and "Skara Brae." . . . ¶April 9 and April 14 at 8: "Simon Sez," "Charmed Lives," "Re: X," and "The Jig Is Up." . . . ¶April 11 at 2 (a family matinée): "Sleep Study," "23 Skidoo," "Joggers," and "Meshugana Dance." . . . ¶April 11 at 8: "Doo Dah Day," "Ion," "Yo, Johann," and "Paper Tiger." . . . ¶April 12 at 2 (a family matinée): "Hello Fancy," "Half Time," "Evening Chant," and "The Jig Is Up." (Joyce Theatre, 175 Eighth Ave., at 19th St. 242-0800. Through April 26.)

SPLIT STREAM—The choreographers Jeanine Durning and Sara Hook share a program, with Durning offering "Dissolve" and "Pilgrim Hull" and Hook presenting "Bashibazouk," "A Minor Bombast," and "Buff 'Em Up Baby Doll." (Dance Theatre Workshop, 219 W. 19th St. 924-0077. April 9-11 at 8 and April 12 at 3.)

"ELEVATING SUITE"—Another split bill, with new work from choreographers Yanira Castro ("Vulgar" and "All About Richard") and Melanie Kloetzel ("Bus Culture," "Spherebash," and an untitled solo). (Merce Cunningham Studio, 55 Bethune St. 865-7915. April 9-10 at 9 and April 11 at 8.)

NIGHT LIFE

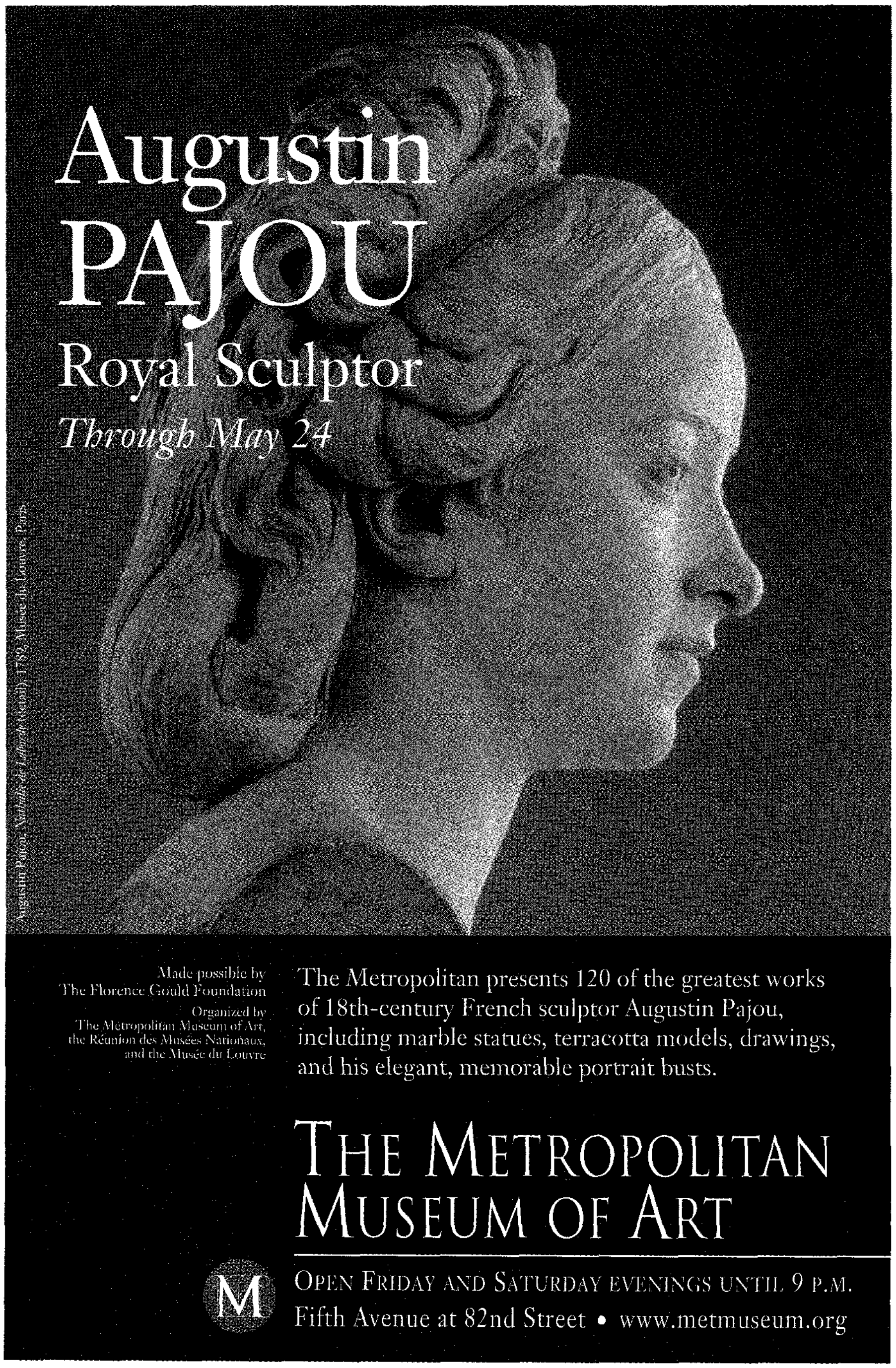
CONCERTS

"BACHARACH: ONE AMAZING NIGHT"—Yeah, baby! A live concert taping for TNT, starring big Burt himself and such noted Bacharachanalians as Dionne Warwick, Elvis Costello, Chrissie Hynde, Oasis's Noel Gallagher, Ben Folds Five, and Mike Myers. (Eighth-floor Ballroom, Manhattan Center, 311 W. 34th St. 564-4882. April 8 at 8.)

"AN EVENING WITH CHICK COREA"—To overlook Corea's serious contributions to contemporary jazz piano simply because of his occasional flights of fusion is unfair. Corea's biting attack and fleet, unpredictable post-bop phrasing put him in the same influential league as Bill Evans, McCoy Tyner, and Herbie Hancock. Many of Corea's compositions are infused with the same wit and flair he brings to the keyboard; hearing these pieces opulently rescored for the Carnegie Hall Jazz Band, with the composer as a featured soloist, should be a treat. (Carnegie Hall. 247-7800. April 9 at 8.)

"CYBER-SEDER"—Passover goes digital as the Knitting Factory hosts (and cybercasts) its third-annual high-tech ceremonial dinner, featuring performances by Lou Reed, Laurie Anderson, Sandra Bernhard, John Zorn, Neta Pulvermacher, the Klezmatics, and Hal Willner. (Avery Fisher Hall, Lincoln Center. For information, call 219-3006. April 12 at 7:30.)

"FRED HERSCH AND FRIENDS: THE DUO CONCERT"—In the past five years or so, pianist Hersch's work has developed an intensity of intelligence and emotional directness unparalleled among his peers. Whether he's performing solo or communing with his interactive trio or with clarinettist Michael Moore, Hersch balances a piercing lyricism with understated rhythmic and harmonic exploration. His all-star collaborative recordings—including the excellent new "Duo Album"—have become poetic milestones. The roster of A-list guests at this benefit concert includes


Augustin
PAJOU
Royal Sculptor
Through May 24
Augustin Pajou, Nathalie de Laborde (detail), 1789, Musée du Louvre, Paris

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saxophonist Joe Lovano, pianist Kenny Barron, vibraphonist Gary Burton, and vocalists Andy Bey and Janis Siegel. (Town Hall, 123 W. 43rd St. 840-2824. April 13 at 8.)

JAZZ AND STANDARDS

(A highly arbitrary listing, in which boldface type indicates some of the more notable performers in town. Musicians and night-club proprietors live complicated lives; it's advisable to call ahead to confirm engagements.)

BIRDLAND, 315 W. 44th St. (581-3080)—Drummer **CHARLI PERSIP** (April 8), one of the unsung journeymen of the sixties, did terrific work with everyone from Eric Dolphy to Dizzy Gillespie. Guided by his experience and knowledge, his band, Supersound, can let down its hair and roar. The big-band composer and arranger **MARIA SCHNEIDER** (April 9) had a nice setup for the past few years at Visiones, where she led her plush, modern ensemble every Monday night. With that club's recent demise, things looked iffy, but Schneider has landed on her feet. This frequently ingenious orchestrator (she's a Gil Evans disciple) weaves thick textures, but also allows plenty of space for some choice soloists. April 10-11: Nobody gets to the still point of a ballad more quickly than **CHRIS CONNOR,** who is fondly remembered from her days with Stan Kenton. Sundays belong to the **CHICO O'FARRILL AFRO-CUBAN JAZZ ORCHESTRA;** Mondays to the **TOSHIKO AKIYOSHI JAZZ ORCHESTRA;** and Tuesdays to the **DUKE ELLINGTON ORCHESTRA.** Dining.

BLUE NOTE, 131 W. 3rd St., near Sixth Ave. (475-8592)—Saxophonist Boney James is in through April 12. Dining.

CARLYLE HOTEL, Madison Ave. at 76th St. (744-1600)—As always, **BARBARA COOK'S** annual April engagement heralds the true start of spring. . . . ¶ On Mondays, **WOODY ALLEN** plays with the **EDDY DAVIS NEW ORLEANS JAZZ BAND.** . . . ¶ Across the hall, pianist **PETER MINTUN** is in charge at Bemelmans Bar.

IRIDIUM, 44 W. 63rd St. (582-2121)—Through April 12: As Spike Lee's own Bernard Herrmann, the trumpeter **TERENCE BLANCHARD** has turned out quite a few vibrant and atmospheric film scores, but his capabilities as a jazz soloist aren't in danger of being overlooked. He's the best neo-Marsalis trumpeter since the big man himself; a thrillingly virtuosic player with a blatant and inviting romantic streak. Mondays belong to electric-guitar innovator **LES PAUL.**

JAZZ STANDARD, 116 E. 27th St. (576-2232)—On April 14-15, **ANTHONY WILSON,** the impressive young West Coast composer-arranger and guitarist (and son of the legendary arranger Gerald Wilson), brings in a well-stocked ensemble, featuring tenorists Bennie Wallace and Ted Nash, trombonist Art Baron, and saxophonists Joe Temperley and Jerry Dodgion.

KNITTING FACTORY, 74 Leonard St., between Broadway and Church St. (219-3055)—In the Old Office, April 8-12: **TIM BERNE'S PARAPHRASE.** A mainstay of the city's new-jazz scene, saxophonist Berne makes music in a skewed language all his own—fractured yet lyrical, scrupulously formal yet edgy with vitality. His new trio features the goading rhythm team of bassist Drew Gress and drummer Tom Rainey. April 11-12: **SAM RIVERS** has earned his stripes. Iconoclast on Blue Note in the sixties, loft-jazz activist in the seventies, stringent bandleader in the eighties, classicist in the early nineties, and now a gloriously unclassifiable perennial, the saxophonist, flutist, and composer is a rugged individualist who shows few signs of running out of steam. He's always two steps ahead of the bandwagon, and it'll be fascinating to hear what he's up to these days.

MANHATTAN CHILI CO., Broadway at 43rd St. (730-8666)—The Microscopic Septet is now a fond memory, but its former pianist, **JOEL FORRESTER** (April 11), has bounced back nicely. Leaving his rollicking new band, People Like Us, at home, this delightful offbeat stylist and composer turns a regular Saturday-night engagement into a showcase for one man's parallel musical universe.

MICHAEL'S PUB AT BILL'S GAY NINETIES, 57 E. 54th St. (758-2272)—**JULIE WILSON,** the doyenne of New York chanteuses, has decided to settle in for a permanent, or at least open-ended, residence at this upstairs club room. For the time being, she's crafting her show as a tribute to the legendary showman Florenz Ziegfeld.

RAINBOW & STARS, 30 Rockefeller Plaza (632-5000)—The great cabaret in the sky. Singer and raconteur **MICHAEL FEINSTEIN** is at the start of a monthlong run.

RED BLAZER, 32 W. 37th St. (262-3112)—April 14: The **KENNY DAVERN** trio. The jazz clarinet has been injected with new life, thanks to virtuosos like Ken Peplowski and Marty Ehrlich, but the state-of-the-art work remains that of Davern: for the past four decades he has tapped into the spirits of such licorice-stick iconoclasts as Pee Wee Russell by tempering a quirky individualism with sterling technique. Davern is accompanied by **JOHN BUNCH** (piano) and **TONY DE NICOLA** (drums).

SWEET BASIL, 88 Seventh Ave. S., at Bleecker St. (242-1785)—Through April 9: Reconciling the influences of polar-opposite tenor saxophonists John Coltrane and Warne Marsh is but one of the more impressive accomplishments of **MARK TURNER,** who is the most mature and aesthetically satisfying tenorist among the current rash of youngish players. Turner draws on Marsh's temperate tone and impossibly long melodic lines and on Coltrane's urgency and biting rhythms; it's quite a balancing act, but he pulls it off with style. On his eponymous major-label début, Turner tackles pieces by Coltrane, Lennie Tristano (of whom Marsh was a pupil and devotee), and Ornette Coleman, and mixes it up with fellow tenor player Joshua Redman. Even without a guest-star horn player, Turner will do just fine in his principal-club début, fronting a worthy rhythm section. Dining.

VILLAGE VANGUARD, 178 Seventh Ave. S., at 11th St. (255-4037)—**JAVON JACKSON** (here through April 12) is no fool. With so many bright young tenor saxophonists around, he has ditched the conventional horn-and-rhythm setup on his most recent recordings and gone outré. Collaborating with Craig Street, the jazz producer of the minute, he experiments with organ, vocalists, and both acoustic and rock-ish guitars, tackling material by composers from Muddy Waters and Serge Gainsbourg to Tony Williams and Carlos Santana. Onstage, Jackson may not be able to replicate all the sonic high jinks of his disks, but his band is certain to keep things lively. The **VANGUARD JAZZ ORCHESTRA** holds sway on Mondays.

ZINNO, 126 W. 13th St. (924-5182)—Through April 11: Trombonists bred in big bands the way **BENNY POWELL** was aren't to be taken lightly. Having come up with Count Basie, Powell knows the value of clarity and the majestic force of the blues. He's accompanied here by pianist **JANE JARVIS** and bassist **EARL MAY.** Dining.

ROCK, ETC.

BOTTOM LINE, 15 W. 4th St., at Mercer St. (228-6300)—April 9: Seventies songbird **MARIA MULDAUR** ("Midnight at the Oasis") joins former Orleans hitmaker **JOHN HALL** ("Dance with Me"). April 11: Veteran folksinger and songwriter **ERIC ANDERSEN** shares a bill with up-and-coming singer-songwriter **LIZ QUELER.**

CBGB & OMFUG, 315 Bowery, at Bleecker St. (982-4052)—Rock and roll always sounds best in a dump, which may be why this legendary club is still thriving.

CHICAGO B.L.U.E.S., 73 Eighth Ave., at 13th St. (924-9755)—April 10-11: Guitarist and singer **MAGIC SLIM.**

DON HILL'S, 511 Greenwich St. (219-2850)—A tidy little SoHo bar with an above-average P.A. system and topnotch local bands on the docket. Friday night is SqueezeBox, a vinyl-and-velvet gay glamfest, hosted by Misstress Formika.

EIGHTY EIGHT'S, 228 W. 10th St. (924-0088)—April 10: Former disco diva **VICKI SUE ROBINSON** turns the beat around.

FEZ, 380 Lafayette St. (533-7000)—April 8: **JOE MC GINTY'S LOSER'S LOUNGE** deconstructs the music of Nancy Sinatra and Lee Hazelwood. The **MINGUS BIG BAND** still packs them in every Thursday. Dining.

IRVING PLAZA, 17 Irving Pl., at 15th St. (777-6800)—April 9: **GOD LIVES UNDERWATER.** April 10: **THE ARTIST FORMERLY KNOWN AS PRINCE** presides over an evening of supercharged funk with **CHAKA KHAN** and **LARRY GRAHAM.** April 11: Jerry Garcia is gone, but **ROBERT HUNTER,** his longtime lyricist, keeps on truckin'. A singer-songwriter with his own singular vision, he may have a more limited forum these days, but he still has something to say. April 14: Harmony-laden countrified rock from **SISTER HAZEL,** the pride of Gainesville, Florida.

Sister Hazel, at Irving Plaza.

MERCURY LOUNGE, 217 E. Houston St. (260-4700)—April 10: The postmodern folk of **JOSEPH ARTHUR,** a recent addition to Peter Gabriel's Real World label.

LES POULETS, 16 W. 22nd St. (229-2000)—The name may be French, but the music here is Latin: expect salsa, merengue, and, now and then, a cha-cha. Dining.

RODEO BAR, 375 Third Ave., at 27th St. (683-6500)—The walls simulate a log cabin, a buffalo head blows smoke through its nostrils, a horse trailer has been converted into a bar. It's just about the best free house in town.

S.O.B.'S, 204 Varick St., at W. Houston St. (243-4940)—April 10: **REUBEN WILSON,** the organist godfather of acid jazz, and the super-smooth reggae of **SISTER CAROL.** Dining.

TRAMPS, 51 W. 21st St. (727-7788)—April 9: The **HIGH LLAMAS,** the most curatorial English band since Stereolab, are proof that some backward-looking music can be forward-thinking. With surprising sincerity, the Llamas mix equal parts Burt Bacharach (see Concerts), Twiggy-era flower power, and "Umbrellas of Cherbourg" Technicolor to make a smooth cocktail that's easy on the ears and appealing to the mind. Too bad they're playing in such an uncomfortable room. With the aural Novocain of **LOW** and the droll synth-pop of **MAGNETIC FIELDS.** April 10: **MIKAL ROSE,** the erstwhile voice of Black Uhuru, and Rastaman **SUGAR MINOTT** take the stage. April 11: The house band of your dreams, the **BROOKLYN FUNK ESSENTIALS** explode the dictionary of funk with fearsome authority.

TERRY MCELROY

ART

MUSEUMS AND LIBRARIES

Metropolitan Museum, Fifth Ave. at 82nd St. (879-5500)—"American Ingenuity," at the Costume Institute, pays tribute to the pioneer women of sportswear—Claire McCardell, Bonnie Cashin, Anne Klein, Vera Maxwell, and Elizabeth Hawes—who gave American ingenues their look of dressy nonchalance. Through Aug. 16. . . . ¶ "Augustin Pajou, Royal Sculptor." Through May 24. . . . ¶ Pierre-Paul Prud'hon (1758-1823) never achieved the fame of the leading neoclassical painter of his day, Jacques-Louis David, but oddly enough he remained popular during the Romantic period, while the greater artist fell out of fashion. This exhibition of paintings and works on paper brings an underappreciated artist to contemporary attention without glossing over his deficiencies. Many of the pictures here are awkward and unconvincing, but a few stand out as brilliant, for example, "Justice and Divine Vengeance Pursuing Crime" (1808), perhaps Prud'hon's masterpiece; some of the portraits; and the drawings of nudes, which have always been prized by connoisseurs. Through June 7. . . . ¶ "When Silk Was Gold: Central Asian and Chinese Textiles in the Metropolitan and Cleveland Museums of Art." Through May 17. . . . ¶ "Paul Strand Circa 1916." Through May 31. . . . ¶ "The Nature of Islamic Ornament, Part One: Calligraphy." Through June 28. (Open Tuesdays through Sundays, 9:30 to 5:15, and Friday and Saturday evenings until 8:45.)

Museum of Modern Art, 11 W. 53rd St. (708-9480)—The Chuck Close retrospective and "Artists and Subjects: Picasso to Stella" examine the guises of twentieth-century portraiture. Through May 26 and May 25, respectively. . . . ¶ "Alvar Aalto: Between Humanism and Materialism," a centennial exhibition that includes sketches, photographs, and maquettes of architectural projects by the Finnish modernist. Through May 19. . . . ¶ A retrospective of the works of Fernand Léger follows the metamorphoses of the French painter (1881-1955), from Fauvist to Cubist to Social Realist. Through May 12. . . . ¶ "The Clutter of Happenstance: Photographs by Robert Cumming." Through June 23. . . . ¶ Twenty-six recently acquired photographs by Garry Winogrand are on view. Through May 31. (Open Saturdays through Tuesdays, and Thursdays, 10:30 to 6; Fridays, 10:30 to 8:30.)

Guggenheim Museum, Fifth Ave. at 89th St. (423-3500)—"China: 5,000 Years" is an impressive survey of art in nearly every medium; it includes some of the country's greatest masterpieces. The exhibition ranges from the Neolithic to the dynastic era and has no particular focus; with works of this quality, however, no one's complaining. Through June 3. . . . ¶ "After 'Mountains and Sea': Frankenthaler 1956-59." Through May 3. . . . ¶ "Visions of Paris: Robert Delaunay's Series." Through May 24. (Open Sundays through Wednesdays, 10 to 6; Fridays and Saturdays, 10 to 8.)

Guggenheim Museum SoHo, 575 Broadway, at Prince St. (423-3500)—"A Century in Crisis" comprises the contemporary portion of the institution's blockbuster exhibition "China: 5,000 Years." Chinese art in the past century has been invaded by Western influences, but typically the styles are picked up decades after they've been abandoned in Europe and America. Although some of the work has considerable graphic power, much of it is problematic. Through May 25. (Open Wednesdays through Sundays, 11 to 6, and Saturday evenings until 8.)

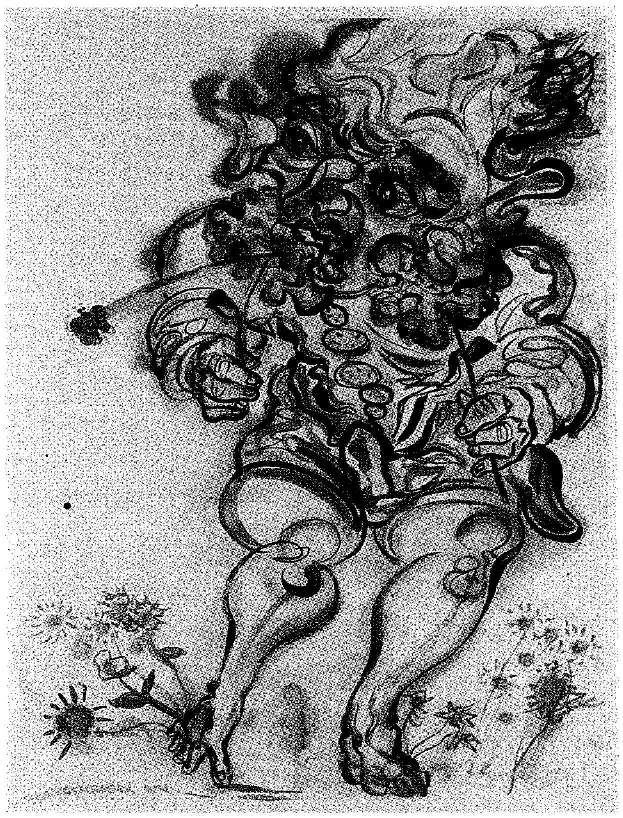
Whitney Museum of American Art, Madison Ave. at 75th St. (570-3676)—The current Bill Viola retrospective is quite a feat of installation, given that much of this pioneer video artist's work incorporates sound and image in complex, quasi-sculptural settings. Viola's work is often very noisy: keeping the experience of various pieces separate is difficult, and at times the show becomes an auditory mishmash. This isn't necessarily a fault, since assaulting the senses is part of his program. Through May 10. . . . ¶ "Arthur Dove: A Retrospective," the first major exhibition in more than twenty years to examine the work of the Empire State abstractionist. Through April 12. . . . ¶ The facelift for the museum's permanent-collection galleries is now complete, with the expanded quarters serving as the new home for key works by Hopper, O'Keeffe, and Calder. (Open Wednesdays, and Fridays through Sundays, 11 to 6; Thursdays, 1 to 8.)

Brooklyn Museum of Art, Eastern Parkway (718-638-5000)—"Jewels of the Romanovs: Treasures of the Russian Imperial Court" presents crown jewels and other baubles, including the most famous sapphire in the world (before Kate Winslet's), a 260-carat specimen given by Alexander II to his wife. Through July 5. . . . ¶ "Masters of Color and Light: Homer, Sargent, and the American Watercolor Movement" showcases more than a hundred and fifty works from the museum's extensive collection. Through July 5. . . . ¶ "Scattered Petals, Fallen Leaves, Shards of Glass: The Work of Bing Hu." Through May 10. (Open Wednesdays through Fridays, 10 to 5; Saturdays, 11 to 9; and Sundays, 11 to 6.)

Museum of the City of New York, Fifth Ave. at 104th St. (534-1672)—"Berenice Abbott's Changing New York, 1935-1939" presents photographs from the heyday of arts funding, when the former darkroom assistant for Man Ray returned to New York and indulged her passion for the city from the South Street waterfront to the outer boroughs. Through June 21. (Open Wednesdays through Saturdays, 10 to 5; Sundays, noon to 5.)

National Museum of the American Indian, 1 Bowling Green (668-6624)—"Memory and Imagination: The Legacy of Maidu Indian Artist Frank Day" presents the work of the self-taught painter, who vividly and frequently recorded (and thus played a role in reviving) vanishing traditions among such native California tribes as the Maidu, the Konkow, and the Tyme Maidu. Through May 3. (Open daily, 10 to 5, and Thursday evenings until 8.)

The New Museum, 583 Broadway (219-1222, ext. 217)—The expanded and refurbished museum reopens with several provocative exhibitions: "Unland: Doris Salcedo," a collection of sculptures—largely furniture that seems to bear the marks of a ghostly presence—created in reaction to the aftermath of violence in her native Colombia (through May 31); "Keeping Up with the Joneses," a group show devoted to work about family (through April 12); and "The Cardoso Flea Circus Video," which records Maria Fernanda Cardoso's three-ring spectacle, with real fleas, in flea-sized costumes, walking a tightrope, swinging on a trapeze, and pulling a locomotive 160,000 times their weight (through April 19). (Open Wednesdays and Sundays, noon to 6; Thursdays through Saturdays, noon to 8.)



Self-portrait by Pier Consagra, at Holly Solomon.

New-York Historical Society, 2 W. 77th St., at Central Park W. (873-3400)—"Paul Robeson: Bearer of a Culture" marks the centennial of the courageous singer and actor with an exhibition of playbills, costumes, F.B.I. files, speeches, correspondence, and other personal mementos. Through July 12. (Open Wednesdays through Sundays, noon to 5.)

GALLERIES—UPTOWN

(Unless otherwise noted, galleries are open Tuesdays through Saturdays, from around 10 or 11 to between 5 and 6.)

Theresa Bernstein—A retrospective of oils and drawings by the hundred-and-eight-year-old realist, one of the youngest painters of the Ashcan school, which flourished in the early part of this century. One spectacular canvas depicts a New Jersey crowd during the First World War, watching the searchlights play on the city sky and reflect off the Hudson, looking for German dirigibles and U-Boats. Through April 18. (Whalen, 24 W. 57th St. 397-9700.)

Maria Martins (1894-1973)—Thirty-one sculptures from the forties by the Brazilian Surrealist, including "The Road; The Shadow; Too Long, Too Narrow" and "The Eighth Veil." Through April 18. (Emmerich, 41 E. 57th St. 752-0124.)

Short List—**ALICE DALTON BROWN,** Fischbach, 24 W. 57th St. 759-2345. Through April 25. . . . **FRITZ BULTMAN,** Schlesinger, 24 E. 73rd St. 734-3600. Opens Saturdays at noon; through April 30. . . . **ANTHONY CARO** and **RICHARD ESTES,** Marlborough, 40 W. 57th St. 541-4900. Open Mondays; both shows through April 25. . . . **TONY CRAGG,** Marian Goodman, 24 W. 57th St. 977-7160. Open Mondays; through April 25. . . . **CAIO FONSECA,** Knoedler, 19 E. 70th St. 794-0550. Through May 2. . . . **EVA HESSE,** Robert Miller, 41 E. 57th St. 980-5454. Through May 2. . . . **LUIS JIMENEZ,** ACA, 41 E. 57th St. 644-8300. Through April 25. . . . **KURT KREN,** Gat, 1100 Madison Ave., at 82nd St. 327-0441. Through May 31. . . . **VINCENT LA SCALA,** Baumgold, 128 E. 72nd St. 861-7338.

Through May 9. . . . **JOHN LEES,** Hirschl & Adler Modern, 21 E. 70th St. 535-8810. Through April 18. . . . **ALBERT MARQUET,** Wildenstein, 19 E. 64th St. 879-0500. Open Mondays, closed Saturdays; through May 23. . . . **AGNES MARTIN,** Pace Wildenstein, 32 E. 57th St. 421-3292. Through April 25. . . . **FÉLICIEN ROPS,** Shepherd, 21 E. 84th St. 861-4050. Through April 25. . . . **PHILIP SMITH,** Danese, 41 E. 57th St. 223-2227. Through April 25. . . . **ESTEBAN VICENTE,** Berry-Hill, 11 E. 70th St. 744-2300. Open Mondays; through April 18. . . . **JOHN WILDE,** Schmidt Bingham, 41 E. 57th St. 888-1122. Through April 25.

GALLERIES—CHELSEA

Mary Heilmann—The artist began her career as a potter, and some of the effects of glazing still give a certain sloppy sheen to her largely geometric paintings. Such modulations in her work are so incremental that they don't seem to matter, especially in the face of so much resplendent beauty. A superb and pretty show. Through April 25. (Hearn, 530 W. 22nd St. 727-7366.)

Ronald Jones—Conceptual sculpture for conspiracy freaks. The titles tell the whole story: "The Bed Ethel Rosenberg Slept in the Night Before Her Execution," "The Bed Neil Armstrong Slept in His First Night Back from the Moon," etc. Based on historical photographs, the beds have been shrunk down to the size of a toddler's cot. They're executed with panache and they're cute as hell, but after the first laugh not much resonates. Be sure to ask at the desk for a copy of Jones's amusing epic in doggerel about Dorothy Kilgallen, the journalist who died mysteriously (or so say the conspiracy junkies) after she interviewed Jack Ruby. Through April 11. (Metro Pictures, 519 W. 24th St. 206-7100.)

Rei Naito—A sculptor from Hiroshima creates forms of astonishing purity: A pale, clean, ten-foot-tall wooden dowel rises true as a plumb line from a flawless marble disk, as if marking the center of the universe. Rectangular niches in the wall hold tiny, transparent organza pillows, so delicate that the viewer holds his breath lest he disturb their quietude. "Namelos/Licht" ("Nameless/Light"), taking its title from Rilke, is an ineffably elegant drawing in red pencil which approaches the threshold of imperceptibility. Through April 18. (D'Amelio Terras, 525 W. 22nd St. 352-9460.)

Mark Sheinkman—In this artist's first show of paintings, canvases curl at the edges and roll up into sculptural forms, mimicking Chinese scrolls, or perhaps monumental peels of birch bark. The visible surfaces are painted in severe, polished monochromes of black, white, and metallic gray, and are scrawled over with broken grids and lines that vibrate like seismic readings. There's a brooding aloofness, if not coyness, in these paintings; the viewer senses that what is revealed is of far less moment than what is concealed inside the scroll. Through April 18. (Healy, 530 W. 22nd St. 243-3753.)

Dan Walsh—A masterly reinvention of geometric Minimalism, with wit and a funky feeling. The colors in these paintings are pretty (bright pink and citrus tones, on a white ground), the lines aren't straight, and the squares have an endearing lack of squareness. In "Projection," awkward rectangles outlined in pale gray fail to align quite, and the ones on the end twinkle Haring-style. Accompanying the paintings are what Walsh calls artist's books, loose-leaf fantasy catalogues printed with bold gray lines that represent gallery spaces, storage bins, and shelving, with tiny schematic drawings of the artist's paintings tipped in. Frank Stella tried to make Minimalism charming and failed; now Walsh has succeeded. Through April 25. (Cooper, 534 W. 21st St. 255-1105.)

Short List—**SIAH ARMAJANI,** Protetch, 511 W. 22nd St. 633-6999. Through May 13. . . . **ANISH KAPOOR,** Gladstone, 515 W. 24th St. 206-9300. Through May 22. . . . **ELKE KRYSTUFEK,** 303 Gallery, 525 W. 22nd St. 255-1121. Through May 6. . . . **MICHAEL KVIUM,** DCA Gallery, 525 W. 22nd St. 255-5511. Through May 9. . . . **ALICE NEEL,** Cheim & Read, 521 W. 23rd St. 242-7727. Through April 25. . . . **MICHAEL ST. JOHN,** Team, 527 W. 26th St. 279-9219. Through April 18. . . . **RANDY WALZ,** Morris, 465 W. 23rd St. 727-2752. Through April 18. . . . **MARY WEATHERFORD,** Debs, 529 W. 20th St. 647-7080. Through April 29.

GALLERIES—DOWNTOWN

Pier Consagra—Drawings, paintings, and ceramics by the Roman expatriate. No matter the medium, the artist blends baroque and cartoon sensibilities. The ceramics, in particular, look like dwarf Berninis dressed by Alexander McQueen. Through April 25. (Holly Solomon, 172 Mercer St. 941-5777.)

A photograph by Fabio Sgroi in his show "Easter in Sicily," at the SABA gallery.

Marcel Dzama—A large selection of small drawings by this young Canadian artist. Dzama's pictures belong to a recognizable artistic trajectory: looking over the doodling, one is reminded of fellow gallery artists Raymond Pettibon and Douglas Kolk; of Mike Kelley, now the grand old man of subversive cartoons; and perhaps of the daft and cruel humor of the late German artist Martin Kippenberger. Definitely a strong début. Through April 18. (Zwirner, 43 Greene St. 966-9074.)

Ellen Gallagher—This young painter continues to insert racial subtexts into formalist, reductively abstract formats. Her previous pictures were rather Agnes Martinish, but these seem to invoke a hodgepodge of art-historical precedents. Not a success. Through April 11. (Gagosian, 136 Wooster St. 228-2828.)

Cornelia Parker—For her installation "Mass (Colder Darker Matter)," this British artist suspended pieces of charred wood from the ceiling. The formal effect recalls late-sixties post-Minimal experiments, but knowing the source of her materials—a Texas church that had been struck by lightning—allows for more of a sublime shiver. Through April 18. (Deitch Projects, 76 Grand St. 343-7300.)

"Archigram"—Drawings, maquettes, installations, and other re-creations of the capsule structures, plug-in environments, walking cities, etc., envisioned by counterculture architects in the sixties and early seventies. Through April 25. (Thread Waxing Space, 476 Broadway. 966-9520.)

"Crowd of Women, 1909-1959: The Collection of F. L. Schroder"—Some seventy portraits of women, all in more or less the same head-and-shoulders format, executed by various artists over a fifty-year period. Schroder, once a painter himself, has turned his eccentric collection into its own work of art. There are obvious similarities to Jim Shaw's wildly popular "Thrift Store Paintings," except these are not refugees from the junk shop. Instead, the paintings achieve a sort of middlebrow aesthetic competence, making Schroder's project even weirder than the now standard resuscitation of kitsch. Through April 11. (American Fine Arts, 22 Wooster St. 941-0401.)

Short List—**MATTHEW ANTEZZO,** Basilico Fine Arts, 26 Wooster St. 966-1831. Through April 25. . . . **JOHN CHAMBERLAIN,** Pace Wildenstein, 142 Greene St. 431-9224. Through April 25. . . . **WIM DELVOYE,** Sonnabend, 420 West Broadway. 966-6160. Through April 25. . . . **MARY ESCH,** Keenan, 3 Crosby St. 431-5083. Through April 18. . . . **HELMUT FEDERLE,** Blum, 99 Wooster St. 343-0441. Through May 30. . . . **CARL FUDGE,** Feldman, 31 Mercer St. 226-3232. Through April 25. . . . **RICHARD HARPER,** Lewin, 136 Prince St. 431-4750. Through April 25. . . . **PETER HRISTOFF,** Beitzel, 102 Prince St. 219-2863. Through April 25. . . . **LIZA LOU,** P.P.O.W, 476 Broome St. 941-8642. Through April 18. . . . **SEAN MELLYN,** Kustera, 41 Wooster St. 965-1527. Through May 2. . . . **FRANK MOORE,** Sperone Westwater, 142 Greene St. 431-3685. Through April 25. . . . **JULIA SCHER,** Rosen, 130 Prince St. 941-0203. Through April 25. . . . **FRED STONEHOUSE,** M-13 Gallery, 72 Greene St. 925-3007. Through May 2. . . . **RUBÉN TORRES-LLORCA,** Knowlton, 568 Broadway. 966-2625. Through April 25. . . . **ANDY WARHOL,** Brooke Alexander, 59 Wooster St. 925-4338. Through June 13.

AUCTIONS AND ANTIQUES

Christie's—April 8: Photography, including two outstanding private collections of images by Pierre Dubreuil and Eugène Atget. (Park Ave. at 59th St. 546-1000.)

Sotheby's—April 8-9: Auctions of fine jewelry and of vintage and modern fashion items (including two fully accessorized Louis Vuitton steamer trunks). (York Ave. at 72nd St. 606-7000.)

PHOTOGRAPHY

Edouard-Denis Baldus (1815-82)—Ten rare 1855 salt prints (in excellent condition) made for the commemorative album "Chemins de Fer du Nord." The images of cathedrals and abbeys along the route of the new Northern Railway from Boulogne to Paris are finely detailed and well composed, but they're not the early French master's most exciting or lyrical views. An additional landscape, of the sprawling château Polignac, crowned by a hilltop fortress, is more satisfying. Through April 18. (Alan Klotz/Photocollect, 22 E. 72nd St. 327-2211. Closed Tuesdays.)

Ilse Bing (1899-1998)—Vintage prints by the avant-garde photographer, who died last month. The show was to have been in celebration of her ninety-ninth birthday (March 23). Through May 2. (Houk, 745 Fifth Ave., at 57th St. 750-7070.)

Ed van der Elsken (1925-90)—Street-chic portraits from the fifties of the photographer's bohemian muse, Vali, and assorted friends. There are also several great sweat-drenched performance closeups of such jazz luminaries as Coleman Hawkins, Dizzy Gillespie, Eric Dolphy, John Coltrane, Miles Davis, and Gerry Mulligan. One picture, of a 1956 Lionel Hampton concert, shows many eager young Dutchmen screaming like proto-Beatles fans. Through April 25. (Gallery 292, at 120 Wooster St. 431-0292.)

Simpson Kalisher—"Railroad Men," a strong show of vintage prints from the fifties that the artist published in book form to great acclaim in 1961. In quiet, unself-conscious black-and-white pictures, Kalisher captured the pride and the burdens of the trainmasters, the boomer switchmen, and the rest of that dying breed. The out-of-print book (a few copies are available at the gallery) includes the stories of such men as Hank, Rep, Hee Haw, Mike, and Old Clyde. Through April 25. (De Lellis, 47 E. 68th St. 327-1482.)

Alexander Liberman—This survey of the artist's work, mostly from the middle of the century, is loaded with stylish portraits of great artists, including a wry three-quarter visage of Marcel Duchamp (plus one of him playing chess), a long view of Picasso slouching in the back seat of his restored Hispano-Suiza, and a studio shot of Alberto Giacometti sculpting one of his famous elongated women, with a cigarette lodged between his fingers. Through April 18. (Benrubi, 52 E. 76th St. 517-3766.)

O. Winston Link—Early commercial work from the thirties through the early fifties by the photographer whose true calling, documenting the Norfolk & Western Railway, was still in his future. Through May 2. (Mann, 42 E. 76th St. 570-1223.)

Ralph Eugene Meatyard (1925-72)—"Master Prints," a retrospective of the lyrical and mysterious work of this optician and autodidact. Through April 25. (Greenberg, 120 Wooster St. 334-0010.)

Fabio Sgroi—"Easter in Sicily," a documentary series of dramatic Easter processions in the hill villages of the largest Mediterranean island. Through May 1. (SABA, 116 E. 16th St. 477-7722. Open Mondays; closed Saturdays.)

"Larry Burrows at War: Vietnam, 1962-71"/"In Country: Vietnam Revisited"—A selection of harrowing color and black-and-white pictures by the intrepid war photographer, who was killed in action. Burrows's iconic vision seems to have been a direct inspiration for Coppola, DePalma, Kubrick, and countless other filmmakers who've tried to capture the horrors of the Vietnam War on celluloid./Photographs taken since 1993 by Mitch Epstein, Lois Conner, An-My Lê, and Abby Robinson. Both shows through April 11. (Laurence Miller, 138 Spring St. 226-1220.)

International Center of Photography—"Micha Bar-Am: An Israeli Photobiography." Through May 31. (1130 Fifth Ave., at 94th St. 860-1777. Open daily, except Mondays, 11 to 6, and Tuesday evenings until 8.)

International Center of Photography Midtown—"Robert Capa: Photographs," a retrospective of the war correspondent's career. Through June 7. (Sixth Ave. at 43rd St. 860-1777. Open daily, except Mondays, 11 to 6, and Tuesday evenings until 8.)

Short List—**uta barth,** Bonakdar Jancou, 521 W. 21st St. 925-8035. Through April 23. . . . **cecil beaton,** Staley-Wise, 560 Broadway. 966-6223. Through April 18. . . . **leendert blok,** Schoormans, 12 E. 2nd St. 477-6953. Through April 25. . . . **james casebere,** Sean Kelly, 43 Mercer St. 343-2405. Through April 25. . . . **hannah collins,** Castelli, 420 West Broadway. 431-5160. Through April 25. . . . **charles hagen,** Morthland, 225 Tenth Ave., at 23rd St. 242-7767. Open Sundays, noon to 5; through April 26. . . . **inge morath,** Leica, 670 Broadway. 777-3051. Opens Saturdays at noon; through May 2. . . . **catherine opie,** Gorney, 100 Greene St. 966-4480. Through April 25. . . . **lillo raymond,** Witkin, 415 West Broadway. 925-5510. Through April 25. . . . **ira richer,** Kasher, 54 North Moore St. 966-3978. Open Wednesdays through Saturdays, noon to 6; through April 18. . . . **august sander,** Cheim & Read, 521 W. 23rd St. 242-7727. Through April 25. . . . **tokihiro sato,** Tonkonow, 601 W. 26th St. 255-8450. Through April 25. . . . **david smith,** Marks, 523 W. 24th St. 243-0200. Through April 18. . . . **william wegman,** Pace Wildenstein MacGill, 32 E. 57th St. 759-7999. Through April 25. . . . **stanislaw ignacy witkiewicz,** Robert Miller, 41 E. 57th St. 980-5454. Through May 2.

(See the museum listings for photography exhibitions at the Metropolitan Museum, the Museum of Modern Art, and the Museum of the City of New York.)

CLASSICAL MUSIC

(The box-office number for the 92nd Street Y, Lexington Ave. at 92nd St., is 996-1100.)

OPERA

Metropolitan Opera—**roméo et juliette,** with Angela Gheorghiu, Kristine Jepson, Roberto Alagna, Russell Braun, and Robert Lloyd; conducted by Bertrand de Billy. (April 8 at 8.) . . . **madama butterfly,** with Galina Gorchakova, Jane Bunnell, Michael Sylvester, and Lucio Gallo; Franz Vote. (April 9 at 8.) . . . With Martin Thompson instead of Mr. Sylvester. (April 14 at 7:30.) . . . **stiffelio,** by Verdi, with Veronica Villarroel, Plácido Domingo, Haijing Fu, and Paul Plishka; James Levine. (April 10 at 8.) . . . **die meistersinger von nürnberg,** with Eva Johansson, Wendy White, Ben Heppner, Gert Henning-Jensen, and James Johnson; Mr. Levine. (April 11 at noon.) . . . **the makropulos case,** by Janáček, with Catherine Malfitano, Graham Clark, Tom Fox, and Stephen West; Charles Mackerras. (April 11 at 8:30 and April 13 at 7:30.) (Metropolitan Opera House. 362-6000.)

New York City Opera—**emmeline,** by Tobias Picker, with Patricia Racette in the title role. (April 8 at 7:30 and April 11 at 8.) . . . **paul bunyan,** by Britten. (April 9 and April 14 at 7:30.) . . . **madama butterfly.** (April 10 at 8 and April 12 at 1:30.) . . . **les contes d'hoffmann.** (April 11 at 1:30.) (New York State Theatre. 870-5570.)

Amato Opera Company—Presenting a family performance of "The Mikado," somewhat truncated. (Amato Opera Theatre, 319 Bowery, at 2nd St. 228-8200. April 11 at 11:30 A.M.)

ORCHESTRAS AND CHORUSES

New York Philharmonic—Kurt Masur conducts Brahms's Piano Concerto No. 2 (with András Schiff, who is beginning a two-week residency with the orchestra), in addition to Schumann's "Genoveva" Overture and Symhony No. 4. (Avery Fisher Hall. 875-5030. April 8-9 at 8, April 10 at 11 A.M., and April 14 at 7:30.)

St. Bartholomew's Choir and Fairfield Orchestra—William Trafka directs Herbert Howells's massive oratorio, "Hymnus Paradisi," composed in 1938. Also on the program are Barber's Adagio for Strings and John Tavener's "A Funeral Ikos." (St. Bartholomew's Church, Park Ave. at 50th St. 378-0248. April 8 at 7:30.)

Grace Church Choral Society—Bruce G. McInnes directs Bach's "St. John Passion," with tenor Jon Humphrey as the Evangelist and bass Sam Sommers as Jesus. (Grace Church, Broadway at 10th St. 254-2000, ext. 105. April 10 at 8.)

Brooklyn Philharmonic—Robert Spano conducts a semi-staged concert version of Berlioz's opera manqué "La Damnation de Faust," with mezzo-soprano Sara Fulgoni, tenor Vinson Cole, baritone James Maddalena, bass-baritone Jeffrey Wells, the New York Choral Society, and the Brooklyn Youth Chorus. Presented in French, with English surtitles. (Brooklyn Academy of Music, 30 Lafayette Ave. 718-636-4100. April 14 at 8.)

RECITALS

Bargemusic—April 8 at 6:30: A dinner concert with Viennese light music. . . . ¶ April 9 at 7:30 and April 12 at 2: Pianist Anne McDermott performs Mozart's Variations on "Ah, vous dirai-je, Maman," and is joined by colleagues for Beethoven's Piano Trio in E-Flat Major (Op. 1, No. 1) and Dvořák's Piano Quintet in A Major (Op. 81). (Fulton Ferry Landing, Brooklyn. 718-624-4061.)

St. Luke's Chamber Ensemble—The instrumentalists perform music by Eric Ewazen, Samuel Adler, Elliott Carter, Meyer Kupferman, and Ellen Taaffe Zwilich. (Dia Center for the Arts, 548 W. 22nd St. April 8 at 7. For information about tickets, call 840-7470.)

Jeffrey Siegel—The pianist performs and discusses popular, "old-fashioned" miniatures, such as Grieg's "March of the Dwarfs" and Dvořák's familiar "Humoresque." (92nd Street Y. April 8 at 8.)

Stephen Herbert Smith—Performing modern piano works by Messiaen, John Wollrich, George Benjamin, Don Freund, Colin Mat-

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LISTENING BOOTH

The Swiss composer **frank martin** (1890-1974) shunned accolades, and today his work seems doomed to hover at the fringes of the repertoire; as a result, people who stumble across his music are often astonished by how persuasively he combined intellectual rigor with an ear for voluptuous beauty. Two new recordings offer an inviting introduction into his world. His a-cappella **mass for double choir,** composed in 1922, remained hidden in a drawer for more than forty years: Martin later explained that he considered the piece "a matter between God and myself . . . removed from public opinion." You'll understand what he was talking about when you hear the imposing interpretation (on Hyperion) by the Westminster Cathedral Choir, directed by James O'Donnell. The men-and-boys ensemble produces glorious sonorities in this sometimes neo-medieval piece; a singer in the bass section sounds positively Tibetan in the Gloria. Also on the disk are Martin's Passacaglia for Organ (modelled after the C-Minor Passacaglia of Bach, his musical idol), as well as another worthwhile discovery composed the same year as the Mass: Ildebrando Pizzetti's Requiem, whose much divided forces sometimes recall those employed by the early-Baroque masters in Venice. Another side of Martin is ardently championed by the Britten-Pears Ensemble (on ASV): his **chamber works**—most impressively his eloquent, light-textured Piano Quintet. A spiky violin sonata, single-movement pieces for flute and for cello (both with piano), and a cycle of four Ronsard sonnets (in a setting for mezzo-soprano, flute, and string quartet) complete the playlist. The influence of Bach makes itself known frequently in these works, without dimming Martin's own distinct, very appealing brand of modernism.

thews, Hilary Tann, and Stephen Montague. (Merkin Concert Hall, 129 W. 67th St. 501-3330. April 8 at 8.)

SoLaRe Trio—The group plays string trios by Beethoven and Françaix. (92nd Street Y. April 9 at 2.)

Borromeo String Quartet—Performing Beethoven's Quartet in F Minor (Op. 95) and Shostakovich's Piano Quintet (with Mia Chung assisting). (Rose Rehearsal Studio, tenth floor, Rose Building, Lincoln Center. April 9 at 6:45. For information about tickets, call 875-5788.)

New York Woodwind Quintet—The ensemble (with Carol Wincenc newly occupying the flute chair) performs quintets by Carter and Villa-Lobos, plus an arrangement by the ensemble's former flutist, the late Samuel Baron, of movements from Bach's "The Art of Fugue" and of Brahms's A-Minor String Quartet. (Paul Hall, Juilliard School, 60 Lincoln Center Plaza. April 8 at 8. For information about free tickets, which are required, call 769-7406.)

Mannes Trio—Performing piano trios by Fauré (in D Minor) and Ravel. (Mannes College of Music, 150 W. 85th St. April 9 at 8. No tickets necessary.)

New York Virtuosi—Tenor Paul Sperry is featured in Robert Beaser's "Songs from the Occasions" (with Kenneth Klein conducting) and Larry Allen Smith's "The Scrolls" (based on a short story by Woody Allen). Also on the program are the Handel/Halvorsen Passacaglia and Schumann's Piano Quintet. (Merkin Concert Hall. 129 W. 67th St. 501-3330. April 9 at 8.)

Pianists on the Rise—Seven prize-winners of the first and second installments of the Kiev International Piano Competition offer one work apiece in this showcase concert. There's one American in the lot—Brian Wallick, a Juilliard student from Hamilton, Ohio, who won the gold medal in the second competition; he'll perform Lowell Liebermann's "Gargoyles." (Weill Recital Hall, at Carnegie Hall. 247-7800. April 9 at 8.)

Ensemble for Early Music—A staging of "The Play of Mary Magdalene," reconstructed by the group's director, Frederick Renz, from the twelfth-century Fleury Playbook. (The Cloisters, Fort Tryon Park. April 11-12 at 3. For information about tickets, call 650-2290.)

Sundays on the Island—Violinist Anton Miller and pianist Ilan Rechtman perform Mozart's Sonata in B-Flat Major (K. 454), and cellist Iris Regev joins them for piano trios by Haydn. (Le Refuge Inn, 620 City Island Ave., City Island, the Bronx. 718-885-2478. April 12 at noon.)

Peter Schreier and András Schiff—The tenor and the pianist perform three of Schumann's song cycles: the two "Liederkreise" (Op. 24 and Op. 39) and "Dichterliebe." (Alice Tully Hall. 875-5050. April 13 at 7:30.)

Stefan Milenkovich—The twenty-one-year-old violinist, who performed for President Reagan at the age of ten, for Mikhail Gorbachev at the age of eleven, and for Pope John Paul II at the age of fourteen, now faces a less forgiving audience—New York concertgoers—to perform his début recital. On the program are Mozart's G-Minor Variations (K. 360), sonatas by Prokofiev (his First) and Ravel, and Paganini's "I Palpiti." Pianist Rohan de Silva assists. Presented by Young Concert Artists. (92nd Street Y. April 14 at 8. For information about tickets, call 307-6655.)

Perspectives Ensemble—The group, assisted by soprano Amy Burton, performs an all-American program, comprising works by Ives, Barber, Bernstein ("Two Meditations," from "Mass"), and Richard Danielpour. (St. Paul's Chapel, Columbia University; enter at Broadway and 116th St. 854-7799. April 14 at 8.)

Piano Quartets—Pianist Ilan Rechtman and colleagues offer quartets by Mozart (in G Minor) and Beethoven. (Hotel Wales, Madison Ave. at 92nd St. April 12 at 6 and 8. No tickets necessary.)

Beaux Arts Trio—The ensemble performs piano trios by Haydn (in A Major, Hob. XV:18) and Brahms (in B Major), and Richard Stoltzman assists them in Bolcom's Second Clarinet Quartet. (Carnegie Hall. 247-7800. April 13 at 8.)

Yael Weiss—Pianist, performing Brahms's Four Ballades (Op. 10), Martinů's "Sonata 1954," and Schubert's A-Minor Sonata (D. 845). (Mansfield Hotel, 12 W. 44th St. April 13 at 8. No tickets necessary.)

Anne-Sophie Mutter and Lambert Orkis—Over the past ten seasons, the German violinist and the American pianist have become closely identified as recital partners. This season, they're investigating the violin sonatas of Beethoven, and will perform all ten of them, in chronological order, in three recitals at Carnegie Hall this month. In the first, they perform the first five sonatas (concluding with the ever-popular "Spring" Sonata). (247-7800. April 14 at 7:30. The other concerts follow on April 22 and April 30.)

ABOVE AND BEYOND

Bonnet Time—Cast members from such Broadway musicals as "1776," "The Sound of Music," and "The Scarlet Pimpernel" perform in the Naumberg Bandshell during the Parks Department's annual Easter Eggstravaganza in Central Park. The day's activities also include egg hunting, dyeing, and rolling, as well as puppet shows and hot-air-balloon rides. (April 11, from 11 to 3. For more information, call 888-697-2757.)

Step Right Up—The Ringling Brothers and Barnum & Bailey Circus returns to its roots by packing Madison Square Garden with three rings of acrobats, elephants, clowns, and—for the first time in years—a sideshow. Its stars include Michu, the Smallest Man on Earth (thirty-three inches); Kahn, the World's Tallest Man (eight feet); and Mysticlese, whose specialties include napping on nails and walking barefoot over swords. (465-6000. Through April 13.)

Gridlock City—The ninety-eighth edition of the New York International Auto Show brings more than a thousand new cars to the Jacob K. Javits Convention Center. Highlights include armor-plated sport utility vehicles and a six-wheeled stingray-shaped amphibious transport. Marking the start of the show, on April 11, twenty alternative-fuel (electricity, ethanol) cars and trucks will form a motorcade at 9 A.M., departing Tavern on the Green, in Central Park, and running down Fifth Avenue and across 42nd Street. The Daily News Marching Band and the New York Knicks City Dancers will accompany the cars for the last leg of the journey, down Eleventh Avenue to the convention center. (Eleventh Ave. between 34th and 39th Sts. 800-282-3336. Through April 19.)

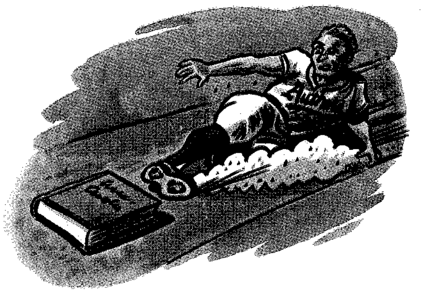
Readings—April 8 at 6: By Zia Jaffrey, from her nonfiction work, "The Invisibles: A Tale of the Eunuchs of India." (New School, 66 W. 12th St. 229-5488.) . . . ¶ April 9 at 8: By Ann Lauterbach, John Hollander, Richard Howard, David Lehman, and other poets, from their contributions to "The Best of the Best American Poetry 1988-1997." (Main Building, New York University, 100 Washington Sq. E. No tickets necessary.) . . . ¶ April 9, from 9 to 3:30: By Rachel Hadas, Edwin Torres, Grace Schulman, and thirty other poets, from the entirety of Dante's Inferno. (Cathedral of St. John the Divine, Amsterdam Ave. at 112th St. No tickets necessary.) . . . ¶ April 14 at 7:30: By Marc Cohen, John Ashbery, and Eugene Richie, from their poetry. (Stella Adler Conservatory, 419 Lafayette St. 260-0525.)

Talks—April 8 at 6: Lawrence Klein, professor of economics at the University of Pennsylvania, considers the ramifications of the recent Asian financial crisis. (New York Academy of Sciences, 2 E. 63rd St. No tickets necessary.) . . . ¶ April 8 at 7: Critic Helen Vendler discusses Shakespeare's sonnets. (Poets House, 72 Spring St. Tickets at the door.)

BOOK CURRENTS

Field Reporters

Before he was the director of several of the best sports movies ever made ("Bull Durham," "Tin Cup," and especially "Cobb"), Ron Shelton spent five years playing minor-league baseball, taking "a lot of bus rides" as a second baseman in the Appalachian League, the Texas League, the California League, the Florida State League, and, ultimately, the International League.



DOUG ALLEN

That experience has left Shelton highly skeptical about the familiar assertion that baseball has inspired more great writing than any other sport. "Most of it," he says, "is too self-consciously lyrical and poetic. When you play the game for a living—or even for fun—you're never thinking about the lyricism of it. You're just trying to get a hit—or not get hit." Shelton does, however, admire two works that treat the national pastime as a metaphor for concerns beyond the sport itself. Mark Harris's 1956 novel, **Bang the Drum Slowly** (Buccaneer), tells the story of a player dying of Hodgkin's disease who conceals his condition for fear of losing his job. Sportswriter Al Stump lived to tell of his explosive encounter with the peerlessly talented and mean-spirited Ty Cobb in an article for *True* magazine which became the basis of Stump's 1994 biography, **Cobb** (Algonquin), which in turn inspired Shelton's film.

When it comes to books about the game itself, Shelton's favorites are Jim Bouton's "unbearably funny" **Ball Four** (Collier) and Roger Kahn's "almost unbearably sad" **The Boys of Summer** (Harper Perennial). "Somehow, between the two," the director says, "you get the whole game." For Shelton, Bouton's tales of his adventures as a major-league pitcher "capture the simple joy of men playing a boy's game." Kahn's chronicle of the Brooklyn Dodgers is unsurpassed at evoking "the melancholy burst of glory and joy and fame." Shelton adds, "The ballplayer's life is a short one. For the rest of his life, he's a former player."

THE
Book
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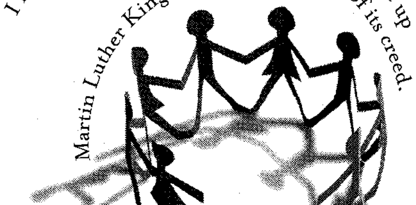
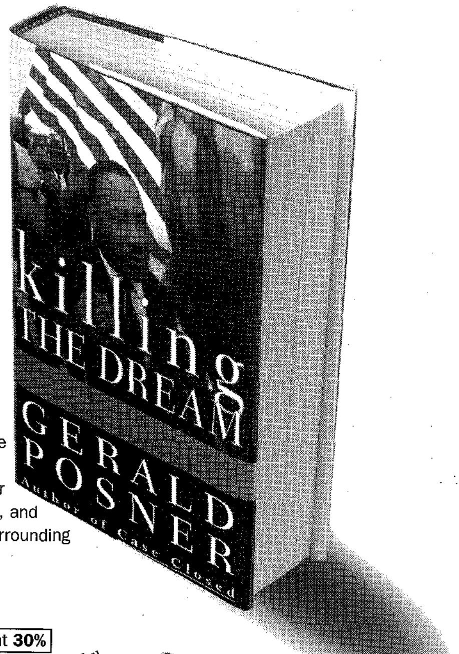
[MARTIN LUTHER KING, JR.]

I have a dream that one day this nation will rise up and live out the true meaning of its creed.
Martin Luther King, Jr.

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THE DREAM
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Author of Case Closed

KILLING THE DREAM

by Gerald Posner

The bestselling author of *Case Closed* applies his investigative instincts to James Earl Ray and the murder of Martin Luther King, Jr. In *Killing the Dream,* Gerald Posner unveils a web of conspiracies, lies, and betrayals that rivals the turmoil surrounding the assassination of JFK.
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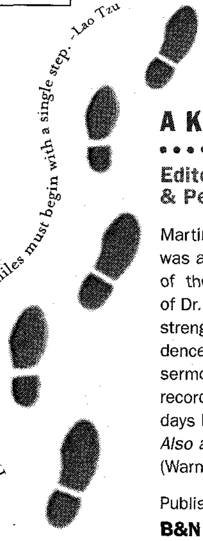
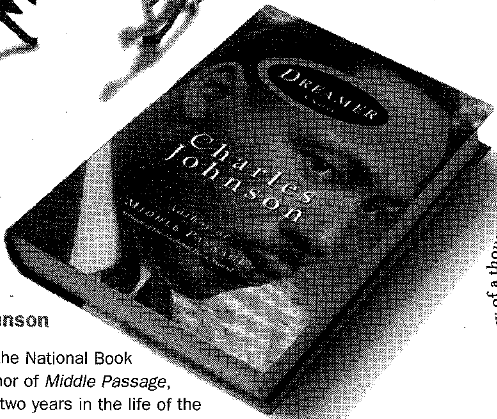
The journey of a thousand miles must begin with a single step. -Lao Tzu




DREAMER
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Middle Passage

DREAMER

by Charles Johnson

Charles Johnson, the National Book Award-winning author of *Middle Passage*, recreates the last two years in the life of the great Martin Luther King, Jr. This historical novel probes the philosophical issues of the movement behind the man, the plurality of his life as preacher, father, and friend, and leaves us with a realized vision of Dr. King.
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A KNOCK AT MIDNIGHT

Edited by Clayborne Carson & Peter Holloran

Martin Luther King, Jr. said, "Before I was a civil rights leader, I was a preacher of the gospel." The wisdom and power of Dr. King's spiritual beliefs fueled his strength as a civil rights leader, as evidenced by this collection of powerful sermons, ranging from his earliest recorded sermon to one recorded mere days before his assassination.
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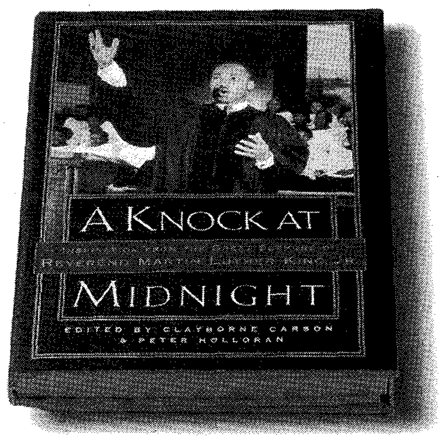
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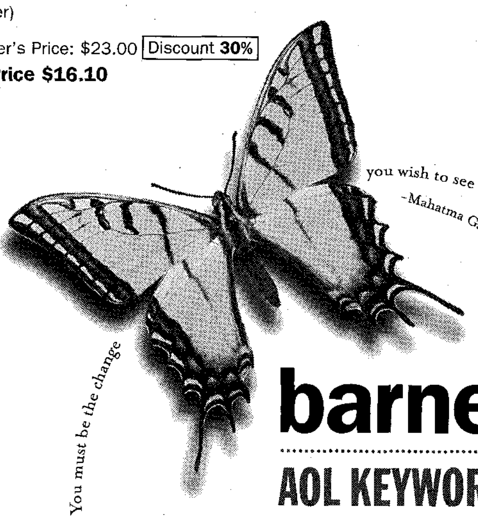

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-Mahatma Gandhi

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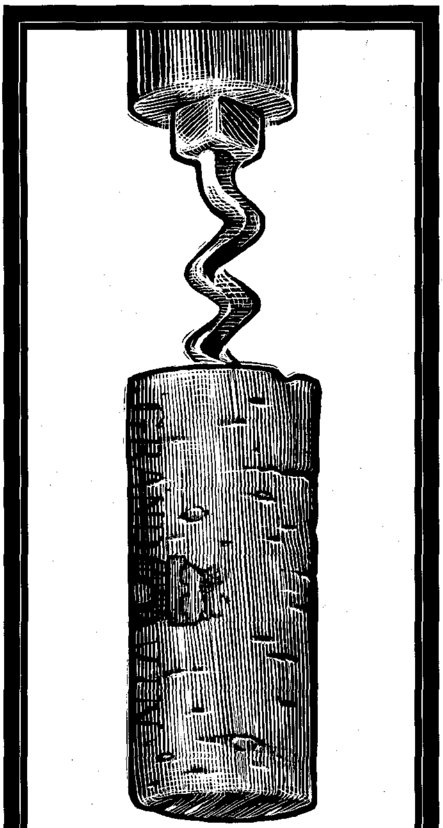

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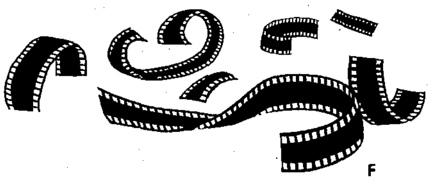


OPENINGS

The Big One—Writer-director Michael Moore takes on corporate downsizing. Opening April 10. (Angelika Film Center and Gotham Cinema.)

City of Angels—Nicolas Cage and Meg Ryan star in a romantic drama, written by Dana Stevens, about an angel who wants to experience being human and the woman he loves. Directed by Brad Silberling. Opening April 10. (Chelsea Cinemas, Criterion Center, Lincoln Square, Murray Hill Cinemas, Orpheum VII, 72nd Street East, and Village Theatre VII.)

I Think I Do—A romantic comedy about the loves of six former college roommates. Written and directed by Brian Sloan. Opening April 10. (Quad Cinema.)

Junk Mail—Pål Sletaune's dark comedy about an Oslo postman who takes an unusual interest in the mail he carries and in one of the customers on his route. In Norwegian. Opening April 10. (Quad Cinema and 62nd & Broadway.)

Little Dieter Needs to Fly—Werner Herzog's documentary about Dieter Dengler. Opening April 8. (Film Forum.)

My Giant—A comedy starring Billy Crystal as a talent agent who hopes to make it to the big time when he meets a seven-foot-seven man (Gheorghe Muresan). Directed by Michael Lehmann. Opening April 10. (Criterion Center, Lincoln Square, Orpheum VII, and Village Theatre VII.)

Neil Simon's The Odd Couple II—The comic adventures of former roommates Felix (Jack Lemmon) and Oscar (Walter Matthau), who meet in California on the way to their children's wedding. Directed by Howard Deutch. Opening April 10.

The Players Club—A drama about the lives of the men and women who work in a strip club, in this début film by writer-director Ice Cube. Opening April 8. (Sutton.)

Sonatine—Takeshi Kitano wrote, directed, and stars in this 1994 thriller about an aging gangster on what might be his last assignment. In Japanese. Opening April 10. (Angelika Film Center.)

Species II—American astronauts bring hostile alien beings to earth, in Peter Medak's science-fiction thriller. Opening April 10. (Criterion Center, 84th Street Sixplex, First & 62nd Cinemas, 19th Street East 6, Olympia, Orpheum VII, 34th Street Showplace, and Waverly.)

Stolen Moments—A documentary about the history of lesbians in Europe and the United States, directed by Margaret Westcott. Opening April 10. (Quad Cinema.)

3 Ninjas: High Noon at Mega Mountain—The ninjas must save an amusement park from a bandit queen, in this action-adventure film directed by Sean McNamara. Opening April 10.

FILM NOTES

(If a movie has been reviewed recently in The Current Cinema, the date of its review is given.)

The Apostle—Produced, written, and directed by its star, Robert Duvall, this film addresses without condescension or glibness a subject—religious conviction—that Hollywood generally caricatures. Duvall plays Sonny, a charismatic Pentecostal preacher on the run from the police. Duvall's performance is so passionate that it's almost eerie: Is Sonny acting him or is he acting Sonny? The supporting players include Farrah Fawcett, John Beasley, June Carter Cash, Miranda Richardson, and Billy Bob Thornton.—*Daphne Merkin* (2/2/98) (59th Street East Cinema and The Screening Room.)

As Good as It Gets—A romantic comedy directed and co-written (with Mark Andrus) by James L. Brooks, in which an improbable trio overcomes a heap of troubles and finds collective happiness, sitcom style. Jack Nicholson stars as a romance novelist with a seriously alienating manner, Helen Hunt is a waitress with a young son who has a life-threatening disease, and Greg Kinnear is a gay painter with a sweet smile and no visible erotic attachments. You keep expecting to hear a laugh track.—*D.M.* (1/5/98) (Criterion Center, Lincoln Square, 19th Street East 6, Orpheum VII, 64th and 2nd, and Village East Cinemas.)

The Big Lebowski—After the mysteriously affecting "Fargo," the Coen brothers have reverted to their pose of cynical disengagement with a movie that—insofar as it's about anything—is about the interface of bowling and Orthodox Judaism. Set in Los Angeles, this irritatingly antic caper stars Jeff Bridges as the Dude, a carefree seventies-style dropout who hangs out at the local bowling alley with his buddies Walter (John Goodman), a chronically irate Nam vet, and Donny (Steve Buscemi), the trio's sweet but dim verbal foil. The clever dialogue and beautiful production design (the lavish dream sequences look like Busby Berkeley on ecstasy) almost make you forget the vacancy at the movie's core, but in the end there's no escaping the feeling that the Coens are speaking a secret language. With Julianne Moore and John Turturro.—*D.M.* (3/23/98) (Chelsea West, Coronet Cinemas, Lincoln Square, and Village Theatre VII.)

The Butcher Boy—The Irish director Neil Jordan's daring new film, adapted from the novel by Patrick McCabe, is a potent remembrance of terrible things past, narrated in a tone of despairing hilarity. With Eamonn Owens, Stephen Rea, Aisling O'Sullivan, Alan Boyle, Fiona Shaw, and Sinead O'Connor. (4/6/98) (Angelika Film Center, Beekman, and Lincoln Square.)

Character—A drama, based on the 1938 novel by Ferdinand Bordewijk, about an illegitimate son, his vengeful father, and murder. Directed by Mike van Diem. In Dutch. (Angelika Film Center, Eastside Playhouse, and Regency.)

Elvira Madigan (1967)—Thommy Berggren gives a skillful, sensitive performance as the handsome young cavalry officer who falls fatally in love with a circus girl (Pia Degermark, who is so exquisitely fresh that she doesn't need to act) in Bo Widerberg's lushly beautiful movie about romantic insanity, set in the late nineteenth century. The lovers, who live only for each other, cut themselves off from society, and prefer to die rather than risk growing apart. Based on an actual double suicide; Widerberg wrote the script, directed, and also edited. Cinematography by Jorgen Persson; the music is Mozart's Piano Concerto No. 21, played by Geza Anda. In Swedish.—*Pauline Kael* (Walter Reade Theatre; April 10 and April 12.)

Farewell My Concubine (1993)—Chen Kaige's film is a big, eventful historical soap opera of the "Doctor Zhivago" school—the sort of drama that uses the unsettled emotional lives of a handful of characters to portray the human cost of war and of constant political upheaval. The movie follows a pair of male Beijing Opera performers, Cheng Dieyi (Leslie Cheung) and Duan Xiaolou (Zhang Fengyi), from their school days, in the nineteen-twenties and early thirties, to their farewell performance together, in 1977. Chen keeps the action charging forward breathlessly, for more than two and a half hours, and at a certain point you begin to realize that the obvious theatre-versus-life ironies are only a small part of what the movie is about. The real subject is whether it's possible, in times that demand perpetual revolutions in values, to remain true to anyone or anything: an art, an ideal, a friend, a wife, oneself. In Mandarin.—*Terrence Rafferty* (Symphony Space; April 14.)

Fireworks—The seventh and most sombre work from the Japanese director Takeshi Kitano. The fact that his movies—like his TV appearances, radio shows, and everything else—have become a cult should not be held against the man; he has carved out his own style, clipped and elliptical, and that is rare enough these days. In the new film, which he also wrote and co-edited, Kitano plays Nishi, a policeman on the slide. Some colleagues were shot on duty, and, rightly or wrongly, Nishi takes the blame. Meanwhile, his wife is dying, so he takes her away for a country vacation, which he finances by robbing a bank; despite all the cops and gangsters on their trail, the two of them enjoy a last, almost wordless idyll. No one but Kitano would have thought to combine cold spasms of violence with such a tender portrait of marriage, or to tinge the whole tale with black comedy; if you can take that mixture, and if you can follow the sly complications of Kitano's chronology, you will not be disappointed. In Japanese.—*Anthony Lane* (3/30/98) (Film Forum.)

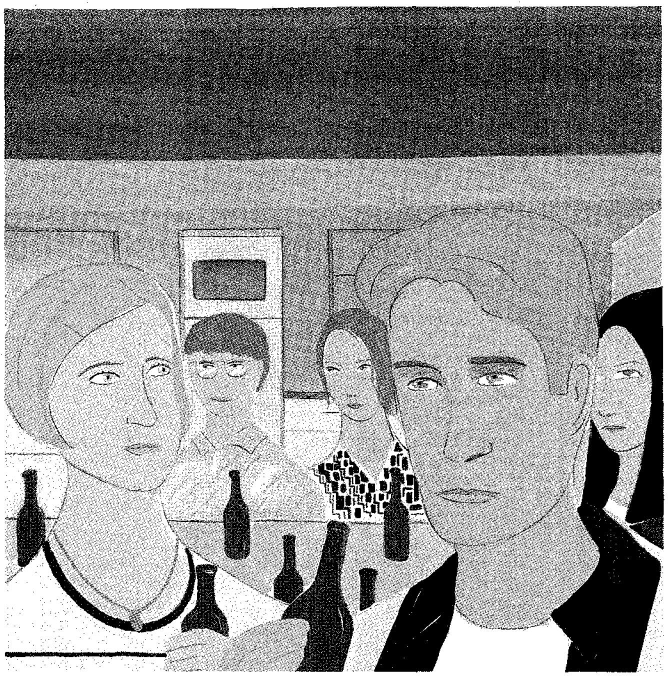
Good Will Hunting—Matt Damon plays a belligerent working-class genius from South Boston who's been abused in foster homes and is now being given a chance to triumph over his past; Robin Williams is the maverick shrink who helps him understand his demons; and Minnie Driver is the unsnobbish Harvard girlfriend who tries to heal him with acceptance. If it sounds treacly, it's not, thanks to a honed script (co-written by Damon and Ben Affleck, who plays Damon's best pal), subtle performances, and surprisingly warm direction by Gus Van Sant.—*D.M.* (1/19/98) (Angelika Film Center, Chelsea Cinemas, Lincoln Square, Murray Hill Cinemas, New York Twin, and State.)

Grease (1978)—At a distance of two decades, what stands out about this phenomenally successful tribute to adolescent horniness? Randal Kleiser's direction looks slow and clunky, the jokes are obvious, the dialogue is boring, and the notion that a woman is either a virgin or a whore is retrograde. But the songs are still occasions for witty, efficient character turns, and John Travolta does his Elvis parody with a crazy conviction that no screen dancer topped until Travolta outdid himself in "Pulp Fiction." Other charms include Stockard Channing's rowdy, physical performance as Rizzo, the slut, and Eve Arden as—what else?—the affectionately knowing school principal.—*Sarah Kerr* (Chelsea West, East 85th Street, First & 62nd Cinemas, Guild, Lincoln Square, Metro Cinema, 34th Street Showplace, and Village Theatre VII.)

L.A. Confidential—Curtis Hanson's thriller, set in Los Angeles in the early fifties, is about a group of cops who between them cover the full moral range, from the uptight integrity of Ed Exley (Guy Pearce) to the four-star sadism of Bud White (Russell Crowe). The plot, adapted from the James Ellroy novel, is both murky and tangled, yet the movie never bogs down. Hanson paces the tale with ease, decorating it with one neat performance after another: James Cromwell as the smiling police chief, David Strathairn as an oily pimp, Kim Basinger as one of his prize charges, and, best of all, Kevin Spacey as a "celebrity crimestopper" who gets dragged into the dark and dirty.—*A.L.* (9/22/97) (Art Greenwich Twin, Criterion Center, 84th Street Sixplex, New York Twin, and 19th Street East 6.)

Lost in Space—An adventure in space about the Robinson family, their sabotaged craft, and their efforts to get back to earth, based on the sixties television show. With Gary Oldman, William Hurt, Matt LeBlanc, and Mimi Rogers; directed by Stephen Hopkins. (Astor Plaza, Cinema I, Cinema II, 84th Street Sixplex, Murray Hill Cinemas, 19th Street East 6, Olympia, Orpheum VII, and Village Theatre VII.)

Love and Death on Long Island—A mischievous, surprising film about unlikely romantic pursuit. John Hurt is a British author of highbrow novels who lives in reclusive Luddite splendor until he is smitten with a teen-flick heartthrob (Jason Priestley). One of the many ways in which the film subverts our expectations is by refusing to condescend to its central character; we come to see the lovesick novelist as half stalker, half *poète maudit*, transfigured by romantic greatness. Directed by Richard Kwietniowski, the movie is less about the nature of homoerotic longing than about the closeted nature of love itself.—*D.M.* (3/9/98) (Angelika Film Center, Lincoln Plaza Cinemas, and Sutton.)



Gary Burns's "Kitchen Party," one of the films being shown in the New Directors/New Films series at MOMA.

GEOFFREY PARKER

Mercury Rising—A thriller, directed by Harold Becker, about an ex-F.B.I. agent (Bruce Willis) who protects a nine-year-old autistic savant from assassins. Also with Alec Baldwin. (Art Greenwich Twin, Chelsea Cinemas, Criterion Center, First & 62nd Cinemas, Lincoln Square, Murray Hill Cinemas, and Park & 86th Street Cinemas.)

Mrs. Dalloway—With Marleen Gorris ("Antonia's Line") as director, Eileen Atkins as screenwriter, and Vanessa Redgrave in the title role, the near-impossible is achieved: Virginia Woolf's lyrical evocation of life-as-flux is safely transferred to the screen, helped by an evocative soundtrack, well-edited flashbacks, and an adroit substitution of voice-over for the novel's interior monologues. The supporting performances—by John Standing, Margaret Tyzack, Amelia Bullmore, and Rupert Graves, among others—are a triumph of ensemble acting.—*D.M.* (2/16/98) (Lincoln Plaza Cinemas and Village East Cinemas.)

The Newton Boys—Richard Linklater takes a break from slacker angst to tell the true story of four Texas brothers (idols du jour Matthew McConaughey, Ethan Hawke, Vincent D'Onofrio, and Skeet Ulrich) who robbed banks in the twenties. Linklater has a sharp eye for period detail, and a playful sense of how the Jazz Age played out across the West. But his loose, bantering style flounders in the unfamiliar context. The characters never take hold, and the result feels eerily hollow, like a series of charming improvisational bloopers.—*S.K.* (Chelsea Cinemas, Criterion Center, First & 62nd Cinemas, Lincoln Square, Park & 86th Street Cinemas, and Waverly.)

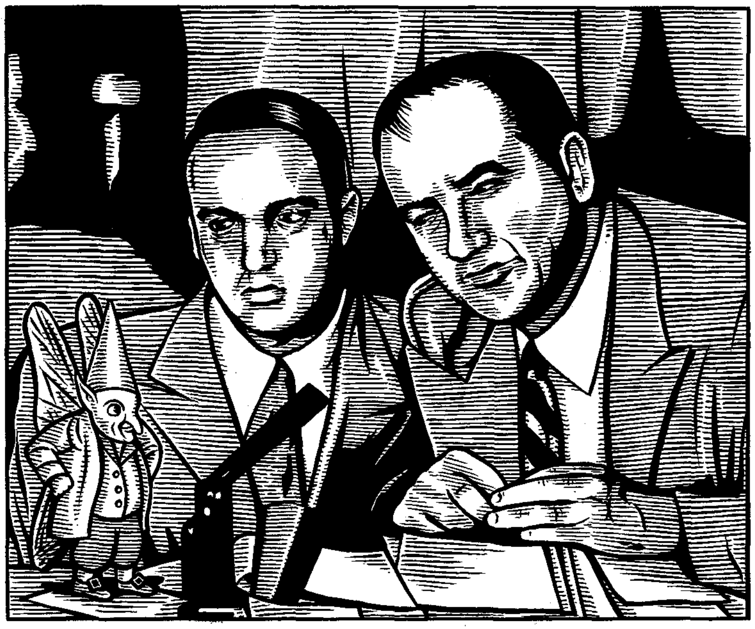
No Looking Back—A romantic drama of small-town life and loves written and directed by, and starring, Edward Burns. Also with Lauren Holly, Jon Bon Jovi, Blythe Danner, and Connie Britton. (Lincoln Square, 64th and 2nd, and Village Theatre VII.)

Point of Order! (1964)—Never has kinescope footage had more impact than in this superb, keenly focussed documentary. Emile de Antonio and Daniel Talbot edited TV coverage of the Senate's Army-McCarthy hearings (of 1954) into a thrilling piece of political theatre about a demagogue's self-destruction. In addition to the baleful, clangorous McCarthy, the "cast" includes Joseph N. Welch, the wry and humane special counsel for the Army, and McCarthy's chief counsel, Roy Cohn, who registers as a malevolent nervous streak even when he's sitting still.—*Michael Sragow* (Film Forum 2.)

Post Coitum—A forty-year-old book editor, contentedly married and the mother of two sons, has an affair with a tall, dark, and handsome engineer, who is twenty years her junior. When this *amour fou* ends, the woman begins to self-destruct—until her star writer, another gorgeous young man, steps in and whisks her off to Greece. This is the sort of movie that purports to deal with such chic feminist issues as middle-aged sexual longing but that seems more at ease with chic aesthetic details—a scarf that's folded just right, tasteful sheets on a bed. Co-written and directed by, and starring, Brigitte Roüan, who should have studied Truffaut's mesmerizingly melancholic "The Story of Adèle H." more carefully. In French.—*D.M.* (Lincoln Plaza Cinemas and Quad Cinema.)

A Price Above Rubies—Renée Zellweger looks alternately bewildered and pouty in her role as the wife of an ultra-Orthodox scholar (Glenn Fitzgerald) who treats marital sex as an indecent diversion from his spiritual duties. The claustrophobic feel of the couple's Borough Park community is effectively rendered, but the movie's emotional tone wobbles confusingly between magic realism and poorly nuanced character study. Still, there's the kernel of something interesting in this I. B. Singer-like tale of a young woman born into the wrong culture who eventually finds a way to make a new life for herself—replete with a Hispanic lover and unkosher egg rolls. With "ER" 's Julianna Margulies, who is utterly convincing as a proper Hasidic wife and mother. Written and directed by Boaz Yakin.—*D.M.* (Angelika Film Center and Paris.)

Primary Colors—Mike Nichols and Elaine May's adaptation of Joe Klein's best-seller about a Clinton-like Presidential candidate purrs along rather winningly and even manages, in the long run, to weave a sad, thoughtful tale. John Travolta peddles his Clinton imitation softly, with the sweet smile and subtle confidence that turn his character into a charming cad, and Emma Thompson, as his cool, politically driven wife, delivers a no-nonsense performance that makes their odd marriage convincing. While the film has many flaws—characters drop in and out with little reason, scenes are cut abruptly, and there's little said about just what the candidate's platform is all about (there's no political depth to May's writing)—Nichols has spun a big, brash Hollywood confection that will send audiences home with still more Clintonia to talk about.—*Bruce Diones* (Chelsea Cinemas, Coronet Cinemas, 84th



At Film Forum, Roy Cohn and Joseph McCarthy in "Point of Order!"

MICHAEL KUPPERMAN

Street Sixplex, Metro Cinema, Orpheum VII, 34th Street Showplace, Waverly, and Ziegfeld.)

The Spanish Prisoner—Campbell Scott, Steve Martin, Rebecca Pidgeon, Ricky Jay, and Ben Gazzara star in writer-director David Mamet's story about the twists and turns of a confidence game. (Reviewed this week in The Current Cinema.) (Angelika Film Center and Lincoln Plaza Cinemas.)

Taste of Cherry—Abbas Kiarostami's new film follows a prosperous man, Mr. Badii (Homayoun Ershadi, heading up a cast of nonprofessional actors), as he drives through the parched hills around Teheran begging strangers to help bury him once he commits suicide. The film isn't quite the masterpiece some critics are calling it; the sometimes ponderous existentialism seems too closely modelled on European masterpieces of a generation ago, and its ending is too clever by half. But it is a collection of small, scattered miracles. In Farsi.—*S.K.* (Lincoln Plaza Cinemas and Quad Cinema.)

Titanic—At well over three hours, James Cameron's grand new picture has plenty of romance to get through before it breaks the vessel in half. Leonardo DiCaprio plays the freewheeling Jack, who wins a steerage ticket and finds himself falling for the wealthy Rose (Kate Winslet), to the disapproval of her mother (Frances Fisher) and her brute of a fiancé (Billy Zane). The social animus of the story, like its imaginative majesty, is Dickensian; this all feels like two hundred million dollars well spent.—*A.L.* (12/15/97) (Chelsea Cinemas, First & 62nd Cinemas, Lincoln Square, Olympia, Orpheum VII, State, 34th Street Showplace, and Village Theatre VII.)

ALSO PLAYING

BOOGIE NIGHTS (reviewed in our issue of 10/13/97): Worldwide Cinemas. . . . **DANGEROUS BEAUTY:** 64th and 2nd. . . . **ENTER THE DRAGON:** Cinema Village. . . . **THE FULL MONTY:** Worldwide Cinemas. . . . **HARD RAIN:** Worldwide Cinemas. . . . **THE MAN IN THE IRON MASK:** Chelsea Cinemas, First & 62nd Cinemas, Lincoln Square, Orpheum VII, State, and Village Theatre VII. . . . **MOUSEHUNT:** Worldwide Cinemas. . . . **THE PROPOSITION:** Cinema 3rd Avenue and Lincoln Square. . . . **U.S. MARSHALS:** Criterion Center, 84th Street Sixplex, Murray Hill Cinemas, 19th Street East 6, Orpheum VII, and Village Theatre VII. . . . **WHO THE HELL IS JULIETTE?:** Cinema Village. . . . **WILD THINGS:** Criterion Center, First & 62nd Cinemas, Lincoln Square, 19th Street East 6, Orpheum VII, and Village East Cinemas.

REVIVALS, CLASSICS, ETC.

(Titles with a dagger are reviewed above.)

New Directors/New Films—A festival of international films. April 8 at 6: "Junk Mail" (Pål Sletaune; Norway). . . . April 8 at 8:30: "The Other Shore" (Dominique Cabrera; France). . . . April 9 at 6 and April 11 at 9: "Mojo" (Jez Butterworth; United Kingdom). . . . April 9 at 8:30 and April 12 at noon: "Moment of Impact" (Julia Loktev; United States). . . . April 10 at 6 and April 12 at 3: "Kitchen Party" (Gary Burns; Canada). . . . April 10 at 9 and April 11 at 1: "Twentyfourseven" (Shane Meadows; United Kingdom). . . . April 11 at 3:30 and April 12 at 6: "Wednesday" (Viktor Kossakovsky; Russia, Germany, United Kingdom, and Finland). . . . April 11 at 6 and April 12 at 8:30: "Murmur of Youth" (Lin Cheng-sheng; Taiwan). (Museum of Modern Art, Roy and Niuta Titus Theatres, 11 W. 53rd St. For information, call 708-9500.)

Walter Reade Theatre, Lincoln Center (875-5600)—A program of Swedish films; in Swedish, with English subtitles. April 8 at 2 and 6:15: "Expectations" (1997, Daniel Bergman). . . . April 8 at 4:15: "Adam and Eva" (1997, Hannes Holm and Måns Herngren). . . . April 8 at 8:30 and April 9 at 2: "Christmas Oratorio" (1996, Kjell-Åke Andersson). . . . April 9 at 4:30: "Their Frozen Dream" (1997, Jan Troell). . . . April 9 at 6:15 and April 11 at 8: "Here's Your Life" (1968, Troell). . . . April 9 at 9:20: "Tic Tac" (1997, Daniel Alfredson). . . . April 10 at 2 and 6:15: "White Lies" (1995, Mats Arehn). . . . April 10 at 4:15 and 8:30 and April 12 at 4: "Elvira Madigan" (†). . . . April 11 at 4, April 12 at 6, and April 13 at 8: "The Voice of Bergman" (1996, Gunnar Bergdahl). . . . April 11 at 6, April 12 at 7:45, and April 13 at 4: "Run for Your Life" (1997, Richard Hobert). . . . April 13 at 2 and 6:15: "The Girl with Hyacinths" (1950, Hasse Ekman). . . . ¶ Weekend showings for children. April 11-12 at 2: "The Master Detective and Rasmus" (1997, Göran Carmback).

Museum of Modern Art, Roy and Niuta Titus Theatres, 11 W. 53rd St. (708-9480)—April 13 at 2:30 and 6: "Yojimbo" (1961, Akira Kurosawa; in Japanese). . . . April 14 at 2:30 and 6: "October" (1927, Sergei Eisenstein; a Russian silent film)

American Museum of the Moving Image, 35th Ave. at 36th St., Astoria (718-784-0077)—April 11 at 2: "The Lost Garden: The Life and Cinema of Alice Guy-Blanché" (1995, Marquise LePage). . . . April 11 at 4:30: A program of short silent films by Guy-Blanché. . . . April 12 at 2: "Hypocrites" (1914, Lois Weber; silent). . . . April 12 at 4:30: "The Blot" (1921, Weber; silent).

Film Forum 2, W. Houston St. west of Sixth Ave. (727-8110)—"Point of Order!" (†).

Symphony Space, Broadway at 95th St. (864-5400)—A series of films that have won or been nominated for the Academy Award for Best Foreign Film. April 14 at 7: "Woman in the Dunes" (1964, Hiroshi Teshigahara; in Japanese). . . . April 14 at 9:15: "Farewell My Concubine" (†).

A Different Light Bookstore, 151 W. 19th St.—A Sunday-night series of free films (and popcorn). April 12 at 7, the feature will be "The Gay Divorcée" (1934, Mark Sandrich).

The Polo Ralph Lauren New Works Festival of Columbia University Filmmakers—More than forty films and videos by students in Columbia University's Graduate Film Division will be shown between April 13 and April 18, at various venues, including DGA Theatre (110 W. 57th St.), The Lighthouse (111 E. 59th St.), and Columbia University's Dodge Hall (Broadway at 116th St.). (For schedule information, call 854-2815.)

Goethe-Institut New York, 1014 Fifth Ave., at 82nd St. (439-8700)—A seven-week-long series of the filmed works of Bertolt Brecht. April 8 at 6:30: "The Threepenny Opera" (1931, G. W. Pabst; in German).

THEATRE ADDRESSES

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(For show times, call 777-FILM, except where noted.)

Angelika Film Center, 18 W. Houston St.
Art Greenwich Twin, Greenwich Ave. at 12th St.
Astor Plaza, 44th St. at Broadway.
Beekman, Second Ave. at 66th St.
Chelsea Cinemas, 260 W. 23rd St.
Chelsea West, 333 W. 23rd St.
Cinema I, Third Ave. at 60th St.
Cinema II, Third Ave. at 60th St.
Cinema 3rd Avenue, Third Ave. at 60th St.
Cinema Village, 22 E. 12th St.
Coronet Cinemas, Third Ave. at 59th St.
Criterion Center, Broadway at 44th St.
East 85th Street, First Ave. at 85th St.
Eastside Playhouse, Third Ave. at 55th St.
84th Street Sixplex, Broadway at 84th St.
86th Street East Twin, Third Ave. at 86th St.
Embassy 1, 2, and 3, Seventh Ave. at 47th St.
59th Street East Cinema, 239 E. 59th St.
Film Forum, W. Houston St. west of Sixth Ave. (727-8110).
First & 62nd Cinemas, 400 E. 62nd St.
Gotham Cinema, Third Ave. at 58th St.
Guild, 33 W. 50th St.
Lincoln Plaza Cinemas, Broadway at 63rd St.
Lincoln Square, Broadway at 68th St.
Metro Cinema 1 and 2, Broadway at 99th St.
Murray Hill Cinemas, 160 E. 34th St.
New York Twin, Second Ave. at 67th St.
19th Street East 6, Broadway at 19th St.
Olympia I and II, Broadway at 107th St.
Orpheum VII, Third Ave. at 86th St.
Paris, 4 W. 58th St. (688-3800).
Park & 86th Street Cinemas, 125 E. 86th St.
Quad Cinema, 34 W. 13th St.
Regency, Broadway at 67th St.
The Screening Room, 54 Varick St. (334-2100).
62nd & Broadway, 62 W. 62nd St.
64th and 2nd, Second Ave. at 64th St.
72nd Street East, Third Ave. at 71st St.
State, Broadway at 45th St.
Sutton 1 and 2, Third Ave. at 57th St.
34th Street Showplace, 238 E. 34th St.
Village East Cinemas, Second Ave. at 12th St.
Village Theatre VII, Third Ave. at 11th St.
Waverly 1 and 2, Sixth Ave. at 3rd St.
Worldwide Cinemas, 50th St. between Eighth and Ninth Aves.
Ziegfeld, 141 W. 54th St.

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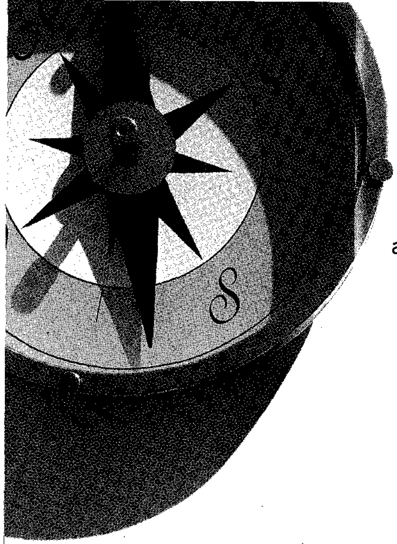

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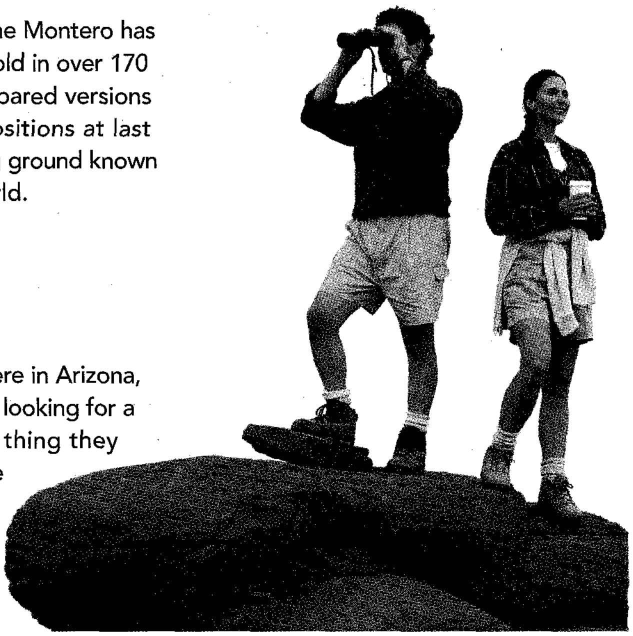

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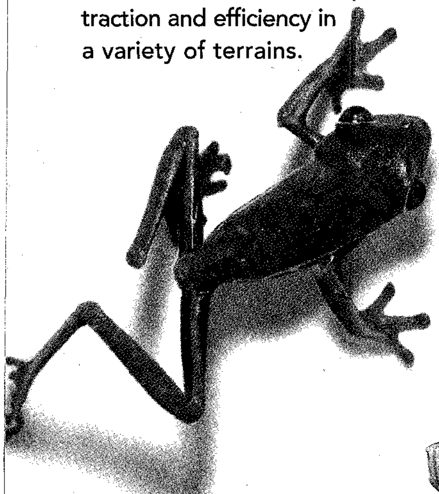

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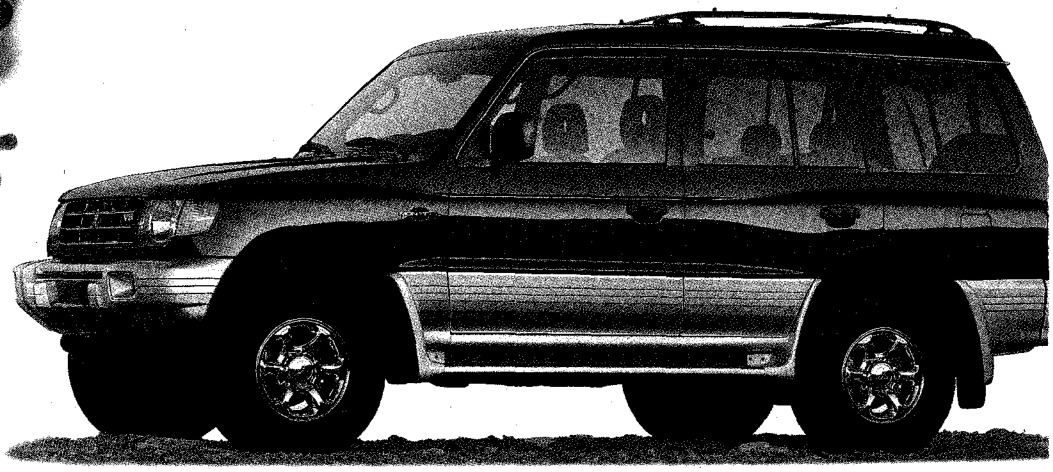

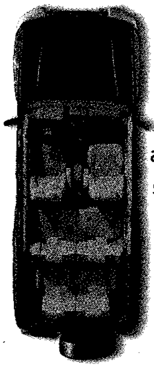

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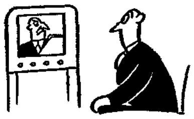
THE NEW YORKER

THE TALK OF THE TOWN

LIFE IN BROADCASTING

Can David Westin and Shelby Coffey jump-start ABC News?



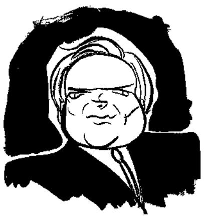
After twenty-one years, the Roone Arledge era at ABC News—an era that redefined the look and feel of American news coverage—is ending. In June, a month before his sixty-seventh birthday, Arledge is scheduled to surrender decision-making authority for News. According to the most reliable of ABC sources, his deputy, News president David Westin, will be named his successor, reporting to the president of ABC, Inc., Robert Iger. Arledge will probably keep his title as chairman. Last Thursday, Arledge and Iger had lunch and discussed the succession.

Westin, who would like to be the first broadcast executive to move the evening news to a 10 P.M. slot, has been negotiating to hire Shelby Coffey III as his deputy. (Coffey, a veteran print journalist, resigned last fall as editor of the Los Angeles *Times.*) The idea was Westin's, but Coffey won the approval of both Iger and Disney chairman Michael Eisner (who is Coffey's friend and neighbor). Westin's background is law (he came to ABC in 1991; he has been in News for about a year), and he no doubt expects that Coffey's news credentials will be appreciated. But Coffey, like Westin, lacks producing experience, and at a time when NBC (Andrew Lack), CBS (Andrew Heyward), CNN (Rick Kaplan), and Fox (Roger Ailes) have chosen producers to head their news divisions, some may wonder why ABC has not.

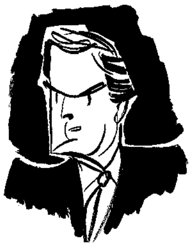
Arledge, like Boris Yeltsin, has presided over an uneasy empire; and he, too, has sometimes presided erratically. Phone calls are not always returned, his attention strays, and aides openly speculate about his whereabouts. Former Cap Cities/ABC president Dan Burke was dazzled by Arledge's gifts as a producer, but he was flummoxed by what he considered a byzantine management style. It was typical of Arledge that in early March he decided that ABC's sister magazine programs, "20/20" and "PrimeTime Live," would consolidate and integrate functions, thus ending the frantic competition between them. But two of the programs' anchors, Diane Sawyer and Barbara Walters, among others, vigorously complained. No, Arledge told a senior staff meeting a few weeks later, maybe consolidation wasn't such a jolly idea. Still, one anchor told me, Arledge's news vision will be missed.

The last days of the Arledge era coincide with a period of turmoil at the network. "World News Tonight," anchored by Peter Jennings, has been trailing NBC after years of dominance. ABC's prime-time ratings had put it in third place, and during the February sweeps it fell into fourth—the first time a major network has trailed Fox.

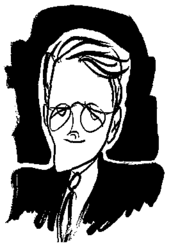
David Londoner, a respected media analyst at Schroder & Co., told a conference last week that he expected the network to show a small loss this year; by contrast, in 1995, the year Disney acquired ABC, the network had a three-hundred-and-fifty-million-dollar pretax profit. Disney is pressing to cut costs. News is expected to be asked to lop between twenty-five and fifty million dollars from its six-hundred-and-twenty-five-million-dollar budget, a senior News executive reports.



Roone Arledge



Peter Jennings



David Westin

Morale is low among many of the thirteen hundred News employees. As the networks are losing their audience to cable and the Internet, near-despair has set in. "Now people are walking around with ratings and households and demographics," a senior News executive says. "You get young people who come to story meetings supporting stories on the elderly because our demos skew old."

Westin's colleagues know he is smart, solicitous, and smooth, but they worry that he lacks Arledge's instincts and creativity. So they test Westin, like a rookie—much as they tested Arledge when he moved from Sports. When former CBS News president Fred Friendly died last month, Peter Jennings clipped a laudatory story and sent it to Westin, asking for his views. His response might have surprised those who underestimate him: he dispatched a lucid three-page essay about profits vs. news, and the necessity for serious international news coverage, and he elaborated on how the nightly news might benefit from a prime-time slot.

In fact, Westin has already talked to associates about the possibility of making magazine shows a regular part of the nightly schedule, then using this real estate to move the evening news to a time when the potential audience is two or three times as large. This would be good for news, because the slot could expand or contract depending on the events of the day, mimicking the front and back of the book in a print news magazine. All this is, no doubt, more plausible because of the innovative spirit that Roone Arledge—the Toscanini of the control room—brought to his kingdom. —Ken Auletta

ILLUSTRATIONS BY TOM BACHTELL

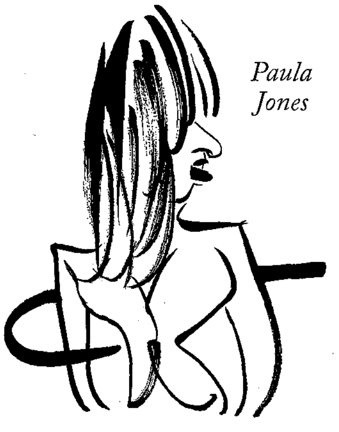
READINGS IN THE LAW

Question: What makes an outrage truly outrageous?

UNLESS you're a Paula Jones obsessive, you may not have realized that outrage was a tort until last Wednesday—or V-J Day, as certain White House types dubbed it, within minutes of the dismissal of the most famous sexual-harassment lawsuit in the world. Indeed, you may still be a little shaky on just what is meant by the Tort of Outrage.

The Tort of Outrage, it turns out, involves things that are very unpleasant, such as (in the words of the Arkansas Supreme Court, as quoted in Wednesday's opinion by Judge Susan Webber Wright) "conduct that is so outrageous in character, and so extreme in degree, as to go beyond all possible bounds of decency, and to be regarded as atrocious, and utterly intolerable in civilized society." (The Tort of Outrage is thus wholly unlike, say, the Torte of Linzer, which involves things that are very pleasant, such as sugar, butter, and raspberry jam.) Paula Jones's lawyers claimed that Governor Bill Clinton was guilty of just such behavior in a suite at Little Rock's Excelsior Hotel on May 8, 1991. Most observers figured that Judge Wright would let this claim go to trial, even if she dismissed the other counts of the Jones lawsuit. Most observers were wrong.

A quick lesson in the Tort of Outrage may be found in Section 46 of "Restatement of the Law, Second, Torts," a publication of the American Law Institute. This publication is sort of like a Cliffs Notes for lawyers—the Trot of Torts, you might say. Section 46 consists mainly of examples of what sorts of outrage do and do not rise to the level of outrageousness required to qualify a given Outrage for the august title of Tort. All the examples are taken from real cases, and many of them are dangerous to read with a mouthful of hot coffee. For example, here's one that doesn't make the cut:



Paula Jones

> A is an otherwise normal girl who is a little overweight, and is quite sensitive about it. Knowing this, B tells A that she looks like a hippopotamus. This causes A to become embarrassed and angry. She broods over the incident, and is made ill. B is not liable to A.

Here's one that does:

> A, an eccentric and mentally deficient old maid, has the delusion that a pot of gold is buried in her back yard, and is always digging for it. Knowing this, B buries a pot with other contents in her yard, and when A digs it up causes her to be escorted in triumph to the city hall, where the pot is opened under circumstances of public humiliation to A. A suffers severe emotional disturbance and resulting illness. B is subject to liability to A for both.

And one more:

> A is invited to a swimming party at an exclusive resort. B gives her a bathing suit which he knows will dissolve in water. It does dissolve while she is swimming, leaving her naked in the presence of men and women whom she has just met. A suffers extreme embarrassment, shame, and humiliation. B is subject to liability to A for her emotional distress.

Judge Wright did not mention these examples in her decision in Jones v. Clinton, but they give a flavor of the kinds of issues she had to grapple with. Clinton's purported hotel-room behavior—a bit of chitchat, followed by dropping trou, followed by a suggestion to "kiss it," followed by (after being told "I'm not that kind of girl") a sheepish plea to keep the whole unfortunate business "between ourselves"—was deemed "boorish and offensive," but insufficiently atrocious to be Tortworthy, and one can see why. For one thing, no dissolving bathing suits were involved. For another, Paula Jones does not in the least resemble a hippopotamus, especially since her recent makeover. And, for a third thing, even though Ms. Jones did not win any money damages in her lawsuit, the pot of gold buried in her yard has turned out, on being dug up, to contain the real thing: when she heard the news of the dismissal over her car phone and pulled her car over to the side of the road to have a good cry, the car was a Mercedes. One may not necessarily get rich hitching one's star to the Tort of Outrage, but, as many an erupting bimbo with a literary agent has tried to demonstrate, one can do all right casting oneself as the Tart of Outrage.
—HENDRIK HERTZBERG

TABLE TALK

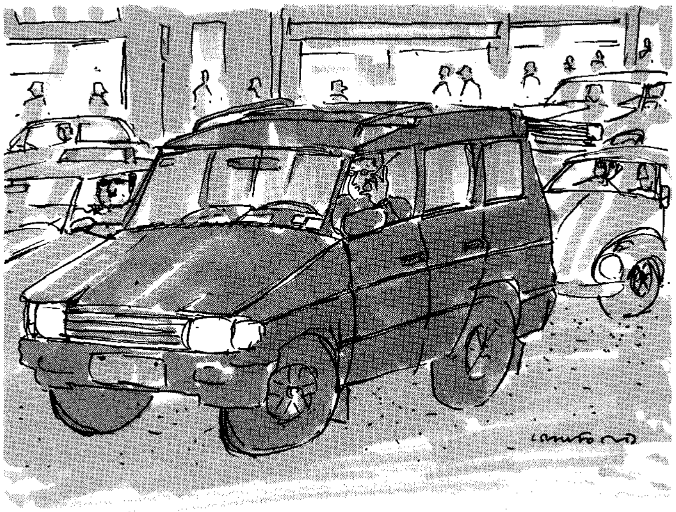
How Philip Roth got a good table at Le Cirque 2000.

ROBERT CENEDELLA should have at least a hundred and fifty-seven interested buyers for the two-hundred-edition serigraph of his mural "Le Cirque, The First Generation," which he unveiled last week at the Galerie Rienzo, off Madison Avenue. That's the number of the restaurant's celebrated patrons and staff whom Cenedella depicted in the original six-by-ten-foot painting, which decorates the entryway to Le Cirque 2000. How it came to hang there in its current form is one of those stories that make New York New York.

About two years ago, when Le Cirque's owner, Sirio Maccioni, was planning to relocate the restaurant from Sixty-fifth Street to the Palace Hotel, the *Times'* former restaurant critic Bryan Miller introduced him to Cenedella. Miller had admired a painting of the artist's in Kenn's Broome Street Bar, a George Grosz-like rendering of the place's regulars. Perhaps, he told Maccioni, Cenedella could do the same for Le Cirque.

Maccioni agreed to feed Cenedella for free while he sketched something on spec. It took about fifty meals for the painting to take shape. Miller helped by sneaking reference photos of the restaurant's famous regulars out of the *Times'* morgue. Finally, after six months, Maccioni travelled to the artist's Tribeca studio to take a look. Soon, like any good maître d', he was orchestrating the seating arrangements. Would Liz Smith really want Richard Nixon at her table? (Cenedella had painted the disgraced President once before—sharing drinks with Hitler.) Why is Woody Allen all the way in the back? And who should sit next to Frank Zappa?

As the artist was finishing up his picture, he met Peter Kaminsky, a writer who was working on a cover story for *New York* about Le Cirque's opening. Kaminsky, Cenedella says, was fascinated with the mural and told him he'd like to do a sidebar on it. In gratitude, the artist offered to put



"You think I would have sunk forty thousand clams into this lemon if I had known they were coming out with a nine-dollar boner pill?"

Kaminsky into the painting, and he did.

When the *New York* story appeared, there was no sidebar—the mural was too big to reproduce well, Kaminsky later explained—and Cenedella was distressed. "It was like a slap in the face," he says. But, after all, the picture was finished, it was hanging in Le Cirque 2000, and there it would rest for posterity.

Except for one thing. Maccioni had a final request. Cenedella had seated the wife of Marvin Shanken, of *Cigar Aficionado*, next to Tony Randall. But Shanken wanted to sit next to his wife. Would Cenedella mind making the adjustment over the weekend if the mural was shipped back down to Tribeca?

Coincidentally, the artist was visited that weekend by Philip Roth. The novelist was researching a work in progress on the blacklist era, and wanted to interview Cenedella about his father, who was fired from his job as head of the Radio Writers Guild in the fifties. The two men got to talking about injustice. For Cenedella, it was only a short step from the unfairness of McCarthyism to the disappointment of not getting the sidebar he had been expecting in *New York*.

As it happens, Roth had recently been featured in *New York*, in an unflattering article about his breakup with Claire Bloom. Inspired by their mutual mistreatment, Cenedella came up with a plan of revenge: why not replace Peter Kaminsky with Philip Roth? Guess who's sitting next to Frank Zappa now. —Eric Alterman

THE BENCH

How Paula Jones's defenders left her defenseless.

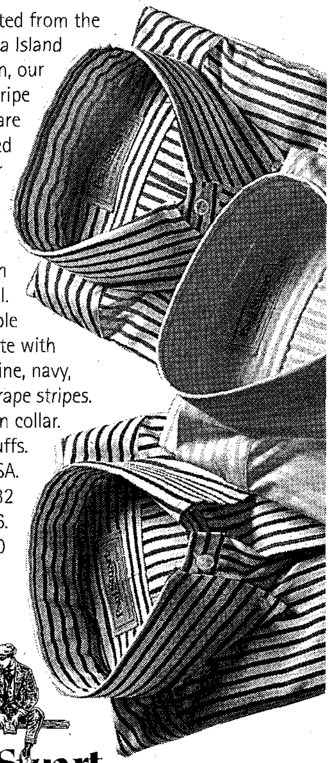
The lawyers and advisers who steered Paula Corbin Jones's lawsuit to its ignominious end last week will probably enjoy a long afterlife on the talk-show and lecture circuit. Donovan Campbell, Jr., of Dallas, John Whitehead, of the now famous Rutherford Institute, and Susan Carpenter-McMillan, of untold snappy sound bites, will probably be dining out on Jones v. Clinton stories for years. But, in light of Judge Susan Webber Wright's brusque dismissal of the case, it's worth noting what Jones got out of all the high-profile assistance: not much.

As the Paula Jones case assumed a larger place in the national consciousness over the past several months, the plaintiff seemed almost a forgotten figure. She was replaced, of course, by the group usually known as the "other women"—Monica Lewinsky, Kathleen Willey, and all the other alleged targets of the President's sexual attentions. This did not happen by accident. As the President's lawyers wrote in their successful brief asking for summary judgment, "Plaintiff spent 99% of her discovery efforts attempting to substantiate rumors that President Clinton made sexual advances to *other* women."

This obsession with the President's sex life meant that Jones's lawyers devoted little attention to the nominal subject of the lawsuit: employment discrimination. In a little-noted admission during her deposition in the case, Jones said that her lawyers had never even reviewed her Arkansas employment records with her, either before or after she filed her case, in 1994. Likewise, during Clinton's deposition the plaintiff's lawyers never asked him whether he had spoken with Jones's superiors about her. In other words, the Jones team made almost no effort to prove that their client had been penalized at work because of her alleged encounter with Clinton. This is because Jones's right-wing lawyers and their sponsors had a political agenda that didn't leave much room for their client.

As it turns out, the Jones lawsuit offers a lesson in the difference between a case and a cause. Jones's original lawyers, Gilbert Davis and Joseph Cammarata—a pair of Washington-area practitioners who had no ideological motives—never saw their client's case as anything more, or less, than another lawsuit. Accordingly, last fall they had agreed to the outlines of a settlement that probably would have brought the Jones family about seven hundred thousand dollars—a good deal by any measure. But the settlement would have stopped the case before the Jones team had a chance to use its subpoena power to explore the President's sex life. Jones's advisers couldn't pass up this opportunity, and so the first legal team was replaced by the Rutherford Institute's foot soldiers—who led their client to defeat.

The weekend before the case was thrown out, the Jones lawyers hit an ethical nadir when they submitted a brief accusing the President of a sexual assault twenty years ago—despite the fact that the alleged "victim" denied that any such event had taken place. Even by the freewheeling standards governing criticism of public officials, you rarely see unsupported allegations of rape. One day later, Judge Wright rebuked the Jones lawyers for their excessive zeal, and two days later she threw out the case. And suddenly it became clear that the person who really deserved sympathy for the sleazy tactics of Paula Jones's lawyers was not their target but their ostensible beneficiary. —Jeffrey Toobin



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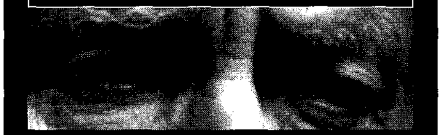

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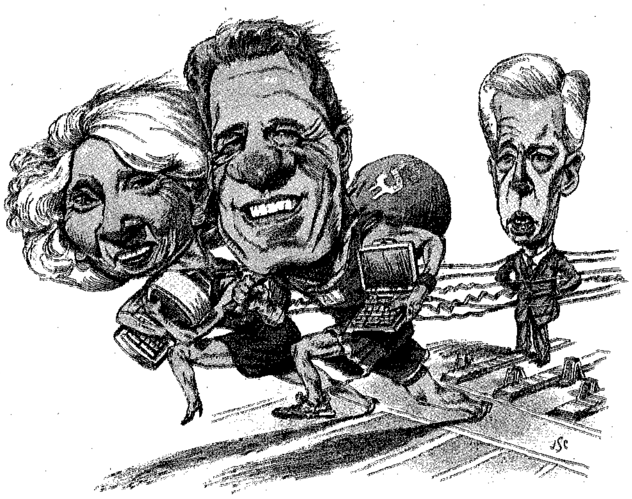
THE POLITICAL SCENE

SOCKET MOMS

Will California's gubernatorial race be decided by a new voter alliance?

BY JOE KLEIN

IN California, politics has vanished into the ether. It exists mostly on the airwaves. It rarely touches ground. The state, it is said, is just too enormous for old-fashioned electoral ceremonies, like speeches and rallies and handshakes; campaigns for statewide office are exercises in telemarketing. Handlers do schedule occasional public events—usually no more than one per day—to keep the political press happy, the party activists engaged, and the candidate occupied. But there are no illusions that, barring some catastrophic gaffe, those moments will have any effect on the race. With such arid parameters, it seems remarkable that the current race for governor has intrigue, import, and subtlety, and may, in fact, be the nation's most significant election this year. It is important for the traditional reasons: the governor of California is a national figure and, perhaps, a participant in the next Presidential election. But this is also a race that may change the way politics is practiced and perceived in the emerging electronic economy—a race that could end up producing a surprising new political alliance.



The archetypes: Jane Harman, Alfred Checchi, Gray Davis.

JOHN CUNEO

The Republican candidate is State Attorney General Dan Lungren, a conservative who may have a national future. (Newt Gingrich wanted Bob Dole to choose Lungren as his Vice-Presidential running mate in 1996.) But the immediate action is on the Democratic side, where three California archetypes are embroiled in a primary election that will be held on June 2nd. They are a businessman named Alfred Checchi, a congresswoman named Jane Harman, and a career politician named Gray Davis, who now serves as lieutenant governor. Staggering sums of money are being spent in the campaign. As of the first day of spring, Checchi—a corporate-finance executive, who helped restructure companies like Marriott, Disney, and Northwest Airlines—had spent eighteen million dollars getting himself known, and that amount could rise to fifty million dollars by June.

The limitless grotesqueries of money politics will be a constant source of fascination in California this spring, but a theme with more long-term electoral significance may be the growing impact of two tectonic voting blocs: one is women and the other is workers in the new, high-technology, "information"-oriented economy. California has plenty of both. It already has two women serving as United States senators, Dianne Feinstein and Barbara Boxer, and no female candidate has lost a contested statewide Democratic primary in more than a decade. If Harman should win the primary and then beat Lungren—and if Boxer should be reëlected, as is expected—California's three highest statewide offices will be held by Jewish women: an electoral phenomenon perhaps more appropriately evaluated by Billy Crystal than by William Kristol.

At the same time, the number of people who use computers on the job—especially those who work in less traditional, more coöperative, and team-oriented settings—appears to be exploding. In a 1996 poll, fifty-one per cent of the California workforce was found to be "wired." More recently, according to Mark DiCamillo, of the venerable Field Poll, forty-two per cent of California's voters said they had E-mail addresses, and about two-thirds of all adults claimed to use personal computers on a regular basis. More important, in both polls the high-tech crowd seems to have a distinct political profile—one that in many ways resembles the political preferences of California women. The techies are slightly more male than female and are furiously nonpartisan (indeed, they disdain standard political rhetoric and bickering). They are libertarian liberals on social issues, like abortion and homosexuality, and they are fiscal conservatives. But they also believe that government should involve itself more actively in issues like education and economic development. "They are very big on 'investment' issues," DiCamillo said. "And those are the same issues that women tend to be interested in." In 1996, the high-tech voters were prescient ticket-splitters: they tended to vote for Clinton for President and for Republicans for Congress. In 1998, their votes may well determine the next governor.

Beneath the grand themes of money, gender, and technology, however, there lies a stark reality: California is one of the few states facing a crisis of governance in this placid decade. For twenty years, since the passage of Proposition 13, an initiative that limited the growth of individual property taxes, the state's education system has been drastically underfunded and, at the same time, subjected to disastrous social engineering, such as forced busing in Los Angeles, and educational faddism. (The California schools were once a national model; they are now among the nation's worst. California ranks forty-first in per-pupil spending. It is very close to the bottom in academic performance. In January, *Education Week* gave the state F's in "School Climate" and "Resources" on its annual report card.) In view of the crisis, a degree of impolitic specificity on education is probably in order from the candidates—a particularly difficult lift for Democrats, who have traditionally lashed themselves to the state's teachers' union and education bureaucrats. But the next governor of California may actually be forced to do some governing. The question of how one actually goes about doing that—running an enormous organization—has become the central one of the spring campaign, with Checchi and Harman, especially, offering distintive leadership styles.

ALFRED A. CHECCHI'S attempt to win California's highest office in his first race—and his last, he insists, if he loses—is burdened by a conundrum: though he will shatter every non-Presidential record extant for money spent on broadcast advertising, he is much better in person than he is on television. On television, he is a cliché: he strides confidently into the future, or walks on a beach with his blond wife and their gorgeous children, or stares pensively out at the ocean, or else he blindly, stupidly, attacks Jane Harman for voting to "tax social-security benefits." (Harman supported President Clinton's 1993 economic package, which included a provision to tax only the benefits of wealthy recipients.) This advertising onslaught has had a limited impact. Checchi has topped out at fifteen per cent in the polls. To less informed voters, he seems the latest iteration of Michael Huffington, the unknown who tried to buy high political office in California by spending thirty million dollars on his benighted 1994 Senate race. But not all the Checchi ads are futile: the candidate's wife, Kathryn, has had some success communicating, in Spanish, with the Latino community, which is flattered by the attention but tends not to vote. Yet whenever her husband is given the occasional line to speak on the air ("I'm not getting any money from insurance companies," he says in a spot on auto insurance, "but if I'm elected, you will") he seems about as convincing as a small-time appliance dealer announcing his spring refrigerator sale on the local cable channel.

The Checchi people are defiantly unapologetic about the enormity of their advertising strategy. Indeed, they seem intent upon intimidating their op-

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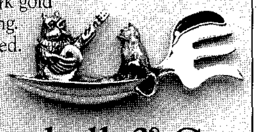

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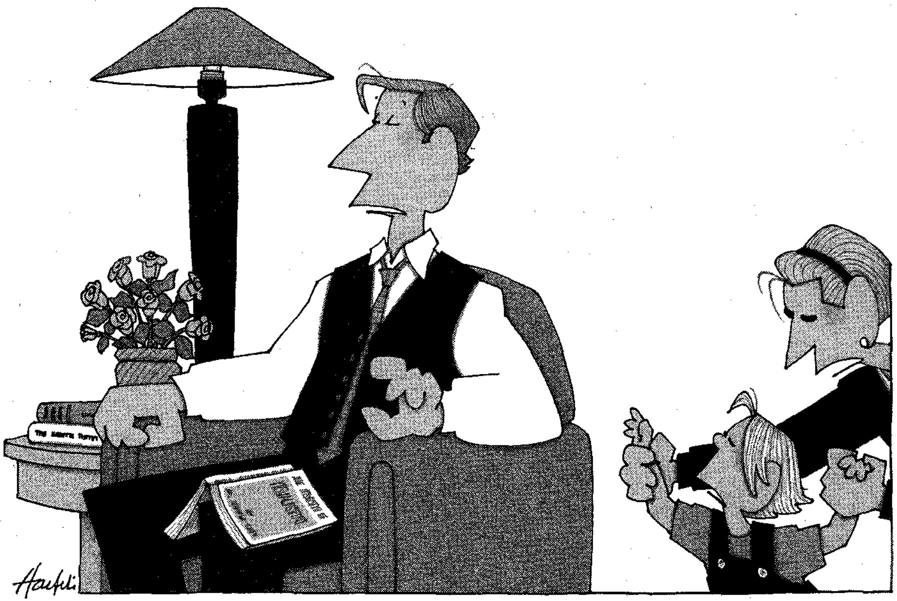


"Don't disturb Daddy. He's busy visualizing unparalleled success in the business world and, by extension, a better life for us all."

• •

ponents: the money they have spent and are willing to spend is a bludgeon. (Moreover, when Checchi's progress in the polls slowed, his advertising immediately went negative: he started attacking Harman.) In the process, according to Philip Trounstine, of the San Jose *Mercury-News*, Checchi has been raising television-ad rates statewide with the heft of his purchases, thereby making it even more difficult for a less well-funded adversary, like Gray Davis, to get on the air during prime time. "It's the first campaign I've come across that appears not to have a budget," Bill Carrick, a media consultant for Harman's campaign, says. "Even Huffington had limits."

In person, Checchi is a bit of a surprise—far more substantial, and less cautiously robotic, than his advertising. He is, in fact, one of the better-informed dilettante candidates of the big-money era. He is tall and trim and looks like a politician: square jaw, red tie, and carefully woven hair. Some of his promises—the ones devised for television—are broad, shallow, and spiffy-neat: a ten-per-cent cut in bureaucracy, a ten-per-cent cut in auto-insurance rates, ten thousand more cops on the street. But his mind is more subtle than that: he is well schooled in the nuances of education, crime, and government finance. And he avoids the usual businessman's cliché that government should run the way business does. "In each of the past three decades, I came into a situation where you had to change a basic corporate culture—at Marriott in the seventies, Disney in the eighties, Northwest in the nineties," he said. "The one thing all three had in common was that none of them had a strategic plan. Neither does the State of California. The way you change a corporate culture is you look at the strengths and weaknesses, you chart a direction, you come up with a plan—and then you sell it. And that's what California needs—a change in its corporate culture. I say to people, 'If you're essentially happy with the way government works now, I'm not your guy.' "

Checchi did go in for some old-style retail politics one recent Friday morning in Sonoma County, although he did it as a personal favor to Assemblywoman Valerie Brown, who has endorsed him. He spoke to several dozen local leaders and was quite impressive, especially when he began talking like a businessman, doing incisive cost-benefit analyses of familiar programs, like higher education. "It costs thirty-five hundred dollars per year to send someone to community college," he said. "Studies show that community-college graduates earn about a hundred and thirty per cent more than high-school graduates. Over the course of a lifetime of work, that comes to an average increase of four hundred thousand dollars. That's a pretty good profit for a seven-thousand-dollar investment."

He can do similar analyses of prison drug-treatment programs, school-construction bonding, California's perverse sales- and property-tax structures, and the effect of new housing starts on the economy. "I spent a year studying this stuff with several professors," he told me. "Then I spent fifteen months travelling around the state talking to people. That was time that another candidate would have had to spend raising money. I didn't have to worry about that, or worry about figuring out how to please the special interests."

Checchi has been sniffing at the edges of politics for more than a decade. In 1987, Ronald Brownstein, then of the *National Journal*, found him wandering around Washington looking for a place in history, and wrote a hilarious and perceptive piece about the unknown thirty-eight-year-old corporate whiz's futile efforts to enter politics. "He thought he could say 'Here I am,' and everybody would just snap him up," Bob Strauss, the already ancient Democratic fixer, told Brownstein. "Well, that's bull. You can't just announce for governor."

Ten years later, Al Checchi did just that. A politically active Silicon Valley executive told me, "When you see a person like him doing something like this, your first thought is: What's wrong with him?" The executive assumed that the problem was a combination of boredom and egomania. The search for a new challenge, and an extremely well-tended ego, certainly did propel Checchi into the public arena, but there was another reason for the move as well: a nostalgia for the idealism of his youth. Checchi talks about the nineteen-sixties more than seems healthy for a politician in the nineteen-nineties. He describes going with his father, a career civil servant, to hear Martin Luther King deliver his "I Have a Dream" speech. He speaks of "returning" to the days when politicians provided the public with a challenge, a mission. It is nostalgia for a certain style of politics: the Kennedy style. (Checchi's ads, including the one that pictures the candidate strolling along the beach with his family—a reminder of the famous images of Robert Kennedy during the 1968 Presidential-primary campaign—were handled by the longtime Kennedy operative Bob Shrum.) But the cumulative effect is confusing: instead of suggesting a departure from business as usual—a lean, mean businessman proposing a new, entrepreneurial "culture" for state government—Checchi seems to be offering the stalest of embedded images, a discredited form of political machismo. On television, at least, he is the ghost of charisma past.

JANE HARMAN may be the avatar of charisma future. At the California state Democratic convention, in Los Angeles, several weekends ago, she bounced out onto the stage to the tune of "Walking in Sunshine," looking very blond and pert, in a giddy tangerine suit, and then she gave a speech that was—well, it was about as substantial as a puffed-rice cake. The performance seemed a metaphor for her campaign thus far: high style, low content. When Senator Dianne Feinstein announced in January that she would not run for governor, Harman—a relatively unknown three-term Los Angeles County congresswoman—jumped in with alacrity. She hired Feinstein's campaign team and put some snappy ads on the air. (Harman's husband, Sidney, is the C.E.O. of Harman Industries, a successful audio-components company, and the couple spent about a million dollars on advertising a week for the first several weeks of the campaign.) Within a month, according to the Field Poll, Harman had surged past Checchi to take a narrow lead among Democrats, even though a plurality of voters remained undecided.

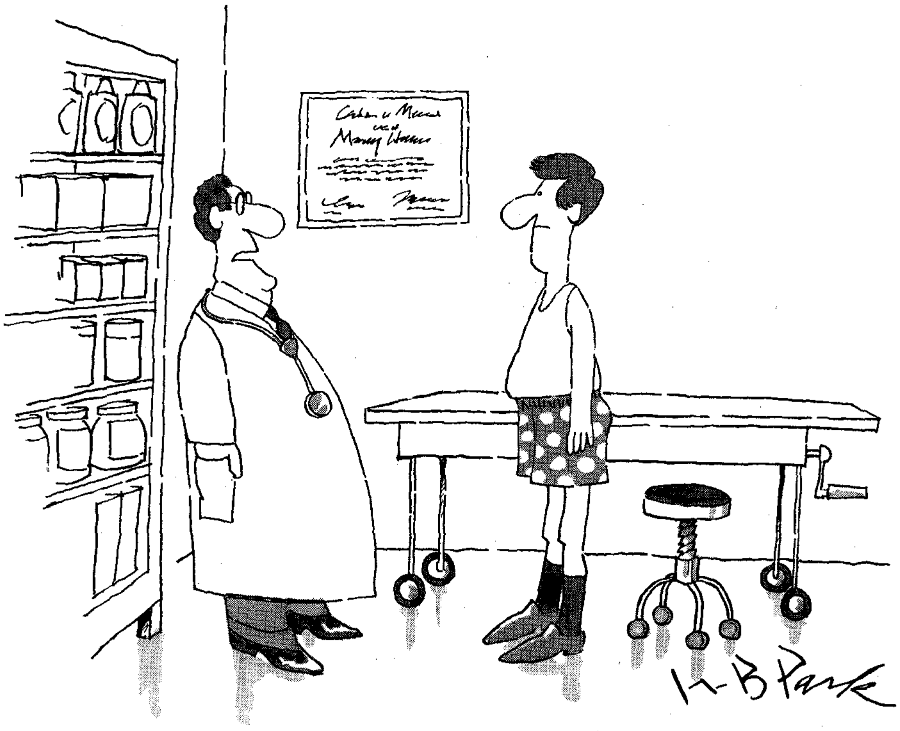
It has been a brilliant opening run, and Harman seems perfectly positioned for the race. She can spend as much money as she wants: she may well approach Huffington's thirty million for the primary alone, but she'll never be perceived as the moneybags candidate—not as long as Al Checchi is buying airtime. She can also emphasize her experience in government—which includes work for former Senator John Tunney, an executive job in the Carter White House, and her time in Congress—but she'll never be perceived as the establishment candidate as long as Gray Davis is puttering about. (Davis, whose first name pretty much sums up his political presence, lost much of his support to Harman when she entered the race, and is now running a vaporous third.)

And then there's the fact that she wears a skirt; indeed, sometimes she wears a miniskirt (which I calculated, with the help of several skirt-wearing reporters at the convention, to be about three inches above the knee). Being a woman is no small advantage in the California Democratic Party in the nineties. "It's almost a demographic lock," Sherry Bebitch Jeffe, a Claremont University political scientist, says. "The California Democratic Party is about fifty-seven per cent female. And the litmus-test issue is 'choice.' Women just don't seem to trust men when it comes to that." (Mark DiCamillo, of the Field Poll, says that two-thirds of all Californians support abortion rights—a much wider margin than most other states—and that's a real problem in the general election for Dan Lungren, who, unlike the incumbent Republican, Pete Wilson, is "pro-life.")

Most of the women I spoke with said all the right things when they were asked about how they made their choices—it's not the gender of the candidate, they noted, it's the issues—but they seemed to experience an almost evangelical lurch on being confronted with a non-male candidate. At a breakfast meeting in Oakland, women—not just women but women *politicians*—jumped up to announce, unbidden and unbought, that they were endorsing Harman. "I'm for you!" Mary King, the Alameda County Supervisor, said, before Harman had uttered a word. Others, including the mayor of Berkeley, quickly leaped to their feet and answered the call.

A day earlier, in Menlo Park, Harman had impressed a high-octane audience of Silicon Valley executives, male and female. Indeed, she gave one of the most remarkable answers to a stock political question that I'd ever heard. The question was: "How do you want to be remembered?" Harman thought for a moment, then said, "I'd like people to say, 'She really listened, and she really cared about being a good mother.' " There were gasps in the room.

Several women executives later explained their reaction. They pointed out that a male candidate would have answered the question by saying something like "I want to be remembered as the Education Governor"—or, as Al Checchi often says, "as the first 'builder' since Pat Brown held the office." Cindy Rubin, a government-



"Sure, we doctors make a lot of money. But, don't forget, we spend a heck of a lot, too."

affairs specialist at I.B.M., said, "Listen to the words she used! She talked about nurturing. She talked about listening, coöperating, reaching out. Those are female words."

But Harman also used words that appealed to the estrogen-challenged members of the audience, words that implied a way of thinking which meshes neatly with the new California economy—and she spoke them in a brisk, efficient manner that didn't sound much like the usual bloviational intonations of a politician on the stump. "The governor of California has the potential to be a premier digital actor," she said. "Decision-making shouldn't proceed on a top-down basis. It should be more horizontal—and it should be inclusive."

Sitting with Harman at an outdoor café in Menlo Park, I asked her what a "digital" leader was. She drew a distinction between the old-fashioned, "analogue" leadership, which was linear and hierarchical, and the new style. "It's someone who listens, interacts, improvises, and moves," she said. "A hierarchical leader is omniscient. He announces what the policy will be, and his followers execute it. That sort of management style is dead on arrival in government, where you have to build consensus. The digital style is like a jazz quartet, where all the players are operating independently but are picking up signals from each other. It's also the style of the new economy; it's how the leaders of these Silicon Valley companies have created wealth—with less hierarchical structures, more teamwork."

The style that Harman describes also appears to be, by no small coincidence, the way that women operate in positions of authority—at least, according to women who study women in positions of authority. "Their pattern tends to be highly collective and collaborative," Carole Leland, of the Center for Creative Leadership, says. A considerable body of sociological research over the years has suggested that men and women have different leadership styles. The political scientist James Q. Wilson writes, "When a woman has performed better than her partner in some common task, she tends to split the reward equally," whereas men "divide the reward equitably (that is, in proportion to the value of each person's contributions)."

Obviously, women and wonks aren't a perfect match. The E-mail élite—the demographic tribe whose chief seems to be Bill Gates—appears to use coöperative, "female" management styles to pump up alpha-male fortunes. The question is: Are the two groups close enough, in style and spirit, to form a tacit political alliance? Will the next demographic superstars be "socket moms"? If so, the alliance could change the style and substance—and perhaps, eventually, the technology—of politics more significantly than any other force since television. It may have already had an impact: the Clinton campaign team, very sensitive to the whims of both women and high-tech sorts, toned down its partisan pitch in 1996 and has been studiously bipartisan ever since. But precise calculations are difficult to make: the demography of the information-age economy is in its infancy. At the moment, there are only wisps of data. According to the Field Poll, Harman's advantage over Checchi leaps from two points among all voters (seventeen per cent to fifteen) to nine points among E-mail users (nineteen to ten per cent). The numbers are small, and are subject to change. It is also true that women have had an easier time winning legislative races than executive ones. The last two women who ran for governor of California—Dianne Feinstein and Kathleen Brown—lost their races.

Digital leadership can also have a less than inspiring side: it can serve as a camouflage for lack of knowledge. At the Silicon Valley forum, a woman asked Harman what specific proposals she had for improving education. "I don't have all the answers," the candidate answered, digitally. "What's your suggestion?"

"What's *your* suggestion?" the woman fired back. "You're the one who's running for governor."

Harman is not beyond some old-fashioned, analogue-style dodging when she's confronted with tough questions. Asked about a higher minimum wage, she says she favors a "livable wage." Asked about equalizing the education funds that go to rich and poor communities, she says that the entire system is underfunded. "She came before us in Sacramento and didn't answer one question. She said she didn't know all that much about state government," I was told by Valerie Brown, the state-assembly member who travelled with Checchi through Sonoma County. "Women want a woman candidate so badly. I just don't think Jane has the experience to run a big organization."

Checchi will exploit Harman's interactive fogginess. He puts a tough-guy spin on the need to achieve consensus: he talks about meeting with business executives and *telling* them it's in their best interest to fund programs for the poor; he talks about meeting with union officials and *telling* them they've got to reform, "because the public isn't buying their product." He acknowledges the team-oriented atmosphere of the new economy, but his version of consensus-building seems more coercive than coöperative—sensitivity on steroids. "Sure, it's a participative process," he told me, "but you've got to set a strategy. You tell them, 'Here's where we have to go.' The real art is persuading people where their self-interest lies."

AT the end of the morning of campaigning in Sonoma, Checchi was met by a lone, long-haired male protester carrying a portable blackboard that said "Don't Let Checchi Buy the State House." The protester complained that Checchi had been brutal to the workers in the Northwest Airlines restructuring. The candidate went right back at the protester—forcefully, but without raising his voice—defending his position, arguing that Northwest Airlines wouldn't have survived without a face-lift. The protester went on to complain about local problems—education, health care, affirmative action. Checchi held his ground, argued his positions. His staff tried to move him along—and he began to walk across a sun-splashed parking lot, still talking to the protester, his arm around the fellow's back.

"If Al could only get to everyone in California like that, one on one," a staff member said. "You watch, he's gonna get this guy's vote."

And, sure enough, the protester was weakening. "If you win," he said, resting the blackboard on the ground, "please, please think about alternative agriculture, and alternative health systems—and alternative *everything!*"

"Sure!" said the candidate, trying to make a connection. "And you should check out my Web site. It's www.alchecchi.com." ♦

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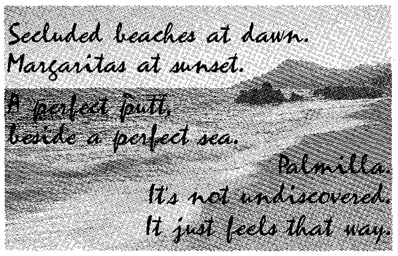

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ANNALS OF HOLLYWOOD

THE EIGHTEEN-YEAR ITCH

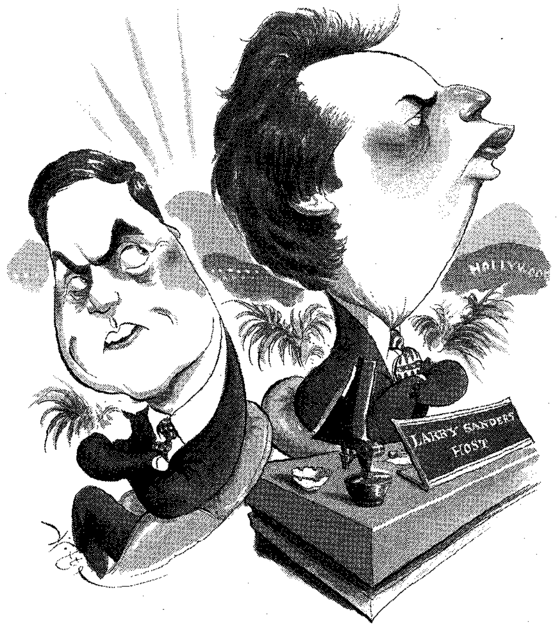
Why Garry Shandling's hundred-million-dollar lawsuit against his manager seems more like a bitter divorce than a business dispute.

BY TAD FRIEND

HOLLYWOOD is too small a town for two people to have lunch in by themselves. Around every A-list table for two hovers a host of shades, unseen mentors and advisers who whisper in ears, sift for conflicts of interest, register minute shifts in the balance of power, and—after raising an eyebrow at the price of sparkling water—make sure that their man doesn't get stuck with the check.

On February 5th, Warren Beatty and Brad Grey had a three-hour lunch at Sushi Ko, a Japanese restaurant off Mulholland Drive. Present in spirit were at least three other well-known entertainment-industry figures who have negotiated with each other over the years. Each man in the room, corporeally or not, was trying very hard to do the right thing. And, if the right thing couldn't be done, each was going to try doubly hard to insure that nobody thought the lunch was his idea.

Grey and Beatty were attempting to negotiate a reconciliation between Grey and Garry Shandling, who is one of Beatty's closest friends. Grey is the chairman of Brillstein-Grey Enterprises and is Hollywood's most powerful personal manager, with a stable of a hundred and thirty producers, writers, and actors, including Brad Pitt and Nicolas Cage. Shandling is the star of and the creative force behind HBO's darkly brilliant sitcom "The Larry Sanders Show." For eighteen years, Grey and Shandling, his close friend and signature client, were a classic odd couple emerging from the same limo at the Emmys: Grey slight and sleek, cagey, with a cocky bounce in his walk; Shandling stiff and embarrassed-looking, but quick with deadpan one-liners about his lame sex life, his dandelion-thistle coiffure, and his emotional isolation. ("My friends tell me that I have an intimacy issue—but I don't think they know me.")



The Grey-Shandling feud has people all over Hollywood questioning their relationships.

MICHAEL WITTE

The proximate reason for the lunch was that on January 15th Shandling had sued Grey for a hundred million dollars in California Superior Court. He alleged, among other things, that Grey had "double-dipped," taking fees from HBO both as Shandling's manager and as the executive producer of "The Larry Sanders Show"; made lucrative television deals by trading on his relationship with Shandling without cutting his client in; and inveigled writers from "Larry Sanders" to create other shows for Grey's television studio.

Beyond that, accounts of what happened at Sushi Ko—and what occasioned the lunch in the first place—are astonishingly various. Brad Grey says that the lunch was Beatty's idea, and recalls the heart of the conversation as follows: "Warren said, 'This is simply a case of Garry feeling you didn't love

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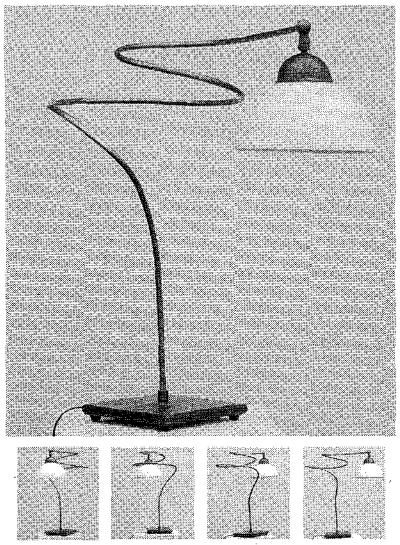

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him enough.' And I started, foolishly, to say, 'That's just not *true!*' And he said, 'No, no, no, no. It doesn't matter what you think. *He* thinks you didn't love him enough.' I said, 'I understand, but I don't love him enough to get this back on track. I just want it to be over.' "

But the lunch wasn't all soap-opera dialogue. To smooth things over, Grey says, Beatty suggested that Grey make a TV-production deal with Shandling and take him back as a client. Beatty proposed that the adversaries meet with him and Michael Ovitz, the legendary dealmaker and a friend of Grey's, to discuss the matter without any lawyers. "Do you trust me? Do you trust me?" Grey says Beatty asked him. "I trust you as much as any actor I met half an hour ago" was Grey's joshing reply.

Warren Beatty's memory of the lunch is distinctly different. He agrees that he suggested a four-man meeting without lawyers, and that the peace process foundered the next day when Shandling wanted his attorneys present. As for the rest of it, he told me incredulously, "I don't believe that Brad Grey said those things to you." He denied saying that Shandling was feeling unloved, denied outlining specific proposals for a rapprochement, and denied, in a particularly nettled tone, that the "Do you trust me?" exchange took place: "Brad was much more respectful than that."

Beatty also said that the instigator of the lunch was actually an old friend of his: the entertainment attorney Bert Fields, who also happens to be Brad Grey's lawyer. When I asked Fields about this, he reluctantly acknowledged that he might well have suggested the meeting. "As a matter of tact, as Warren's friend, I'd probably have formulated it to him as 'This is not good for either side.' But my own view is that the suit will be terrible for Shandling, when all the proof comes out."

The question of who proposed the lunch reveals the deeper issues in the legal dispute, which friends of the litigants compare to a bitter divorce, with both men seeking custody of their shared power and reputation. Both sides are afraid of appearing weak, so neither wants credit for having initiated the meeting or for having voiced a willingness to reconcile. Each man now claims that the other would never have broken through to success without his help. Shandling, in his suit, says that he was Grey's most important client, the bell cow that attracted comic talent to Grey and led an "inexperienced personal manager" into the world of television production. In his cross-complaint, Grey says that Brillstein-Grey's funding and production of "It's Garry Shandling's Show," on Showtime, from 1986 to 1990, "gave Shandling the public exposure and creative freedom he sought, and was a great career boost for Shandling." (In March, Grey countersued Shandling for ten million dollars, claiming that the star's lazy and abusive behavior had cost Brillstein-Grey heavily in excess production costs.)

With the lawsuit pending until next year, each man has retained lawyers and public-relations specialists to proclaim his version of the story and sneer at his opponent's. Shandling has encouraged friends to talk, but he declined to be interviewed. In a statement released through his publicist, he said, "Brad Grey betrayed my trust. His stories about me are false and he knows it, but he's telling them in hopes of discouraging me from pursuing my claim against him. Or, he has me confused with Larry"—a reference to Shandling's high-strung alter ego, Larry Sanders. (A close friend of Grey's acknowledges that airing Shandling's idiosyncrasies is indeed Grey's media strategy.)

The breach has become a parable about the hazards of mixing business with friendship—an ordinary arrangement in Hollywood. Both men are engaged in a kind of brinkmanship that seeks to triumph by exposing frailties discovered and confided during a long intimacy. The intensity of the struggle, in which Grey and Shandling are speed-dialling to enlist allies, has alarmed their friends, and caused people all over Hollywood to wonder how solid their own alliances are. "It's horrible that their relationship has come to this," one of the industry's most famous businessmen says. "They blew it. The combination of money, mistrust, divergent career paths, jealousy, and emotion—that's the recipe for a take-no-prisoners lawsuit, where both men will lose."

"The eggs are all hidden on the South Lawn, Mr. Starr."

It is a measure of just how jumbled professional and personal loyalties have become in Hollywood that two observers familiar with the Sushi Ko lunch offer yet another interpretation of the peacemaking effort: they say that the meeting was Michael Ovitz's idea. One man spins a long, paranoid-sounding tale about Ovitz's alleged conflicts of interest when, years ago, he personally advised Brad Grey while his company, Creative Artists Agency, was representing Shandling. Ovitz, this person says, is on Shandling's deposition list and doesn't want that conflict to come out. The other observer makes the novel suggestion that Ovitz simply wanted to help.

"Trust no one" is the theme, as it happens, of "The Larry Sanders Show." The series, now in its sixth and final season, is a formally innovative backstage look at a Letterman-style talk show which reveals stars and their handlers engaging in a furious roundelay of fudging, arm-twisting, backstabbing, bald-faced lying, and every other conceivable species of bad faith. "If it is true that Garry believed everything Brad told him," says one television executive who knows both men well, and who believes in Grey's probity, "then he's an idiot, and he deserved to get taken."

BRAD GREY said, "O.K., prepare yourself." He pulled out a photograph of himself with Garry Shandling, backstage after a standup-comedy show in the early eighties. Shandling wore a brown leather jacket with a fuzzy black collar, a look that was mildly unfortunate, but Grey sported a white-mesh "Eddie Rabbitt" cap, hair that screamed REO Speedwagon, and forty extra pounds. We were sitting in his office, on Wilshire Boulevard.

"Now, this is the one I've been thinking about," he said, sliding across the desk an eight-by-ten from 1984: Shandling, his arm around Grey, was slim and handsome in a well-cut jacket. He looked like a star. But Grey was still pudgy and unfocussed—someone's awkward kid brother. "And," he said, pausing as he overlaid that photograph with a small shot of the forty-eight-year-old Shandling in a recent issue of *Entertainment Weekly*. Grey, who is forty, pivoted in his chair in the middle of his large, surpassingly clean office and carefully propped his black shoes on a sofa. He waited as I noticed that Shandling looked wan, worn out.

With just a few images, Grey had introduced the idea that he and Shandling had switched roles over the years—that the acolyte had become the mentor. Having asked to see the photographs, I now pushed Grey to interpret them. He said, "Well, I was overweight and very unattractive, just a kid. He has a sparkle in his eye, and you can see that he's in charge—I've since thought he hired me because he knew he'd be in control. But I think *I* have the sparkle now, and he looks like a troubled soul."

Grey told me a story that introduced the idea of envy. Last fall, shortly before he dropped Shandling as a client—and while Shandling's lawyer was inspecting Brillstein-Grey's files—Grey says, Shandling showed up at the house that Grey was building in Pacific Palisades. Shandling told the construction foreman that he was a friend, and just sat for a while gazing at the Prairie-style shingled mansion. Shandling's home, in Brentwood, is legendary in Hollywood as a source of expense and dissatisfaction to him, and Grey says that it was "unsettling" to hear about Shandling eying his house. "I guess he might have been jealous of me, of my . . . happiness. He's alone in a house that he hates, pretending to be happy, with no love in his life." Through his lawyer, Shandling says that Grey had invited him to drop by and that he later told Grey the house was "beautiful."

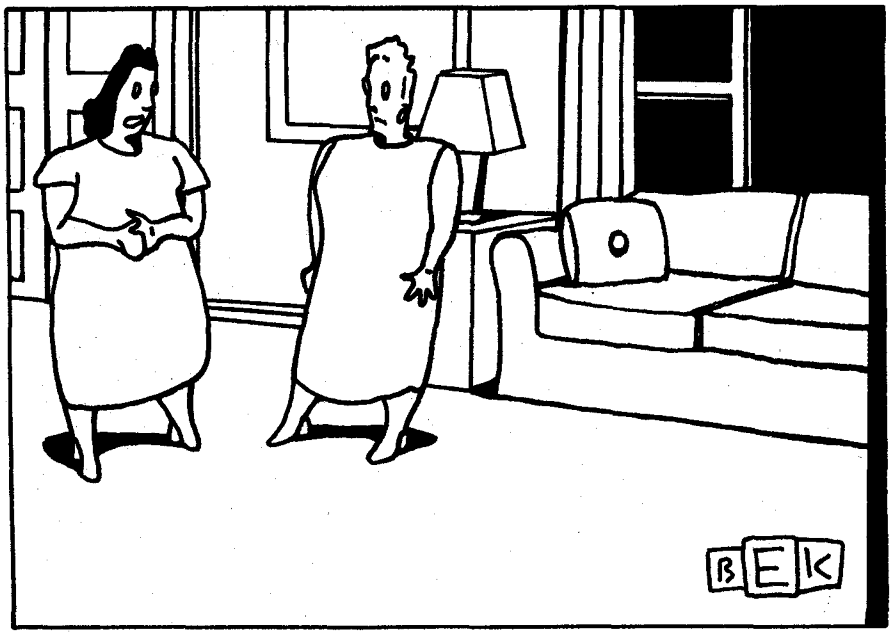
Peter Tolan, a longtime "Sanders" writer, scoffs at Grey's characterization of the dispute as a latter-day version of "A Star Is Born." He defends Shandling against the charge of life-style envy in a somewhat backhanded fashion: "He wouldn't have given a shit whether Brad Grey was successful or not. Garry is marvellously self-absorbed—that's why his work is so good."

In the beginning, Shandling and Grey seemed buoyed and absorbed by each other's promise. They were introduced by Grey's first client, Bob Saget, in 1979, at the Westwood Comedy Store. Shandling, a former writer for "Sanford and Son," signed with Grey, and he introduced him to other promising young comedians, including Dennis Miller and Dana Carvey. In 1983, Grey met his future partner, Bernie Brillstein, after a Shandling gig in San Francisco. Brillstein, the manager of such clients as Jim Henson and Lorne Michaels, liked Grey but didn't take to Shandling. "I thought Garry was a road-company David Brenner," says Brillstein, who is now sixty-six and a genial, white-bearded presence. "But Brad said, 'No, you'll see—he's a genius.' "

In 1985, Grey joined the Brillstein Company and quickly underwent an astonishing transformation. "Brad was a roly-poly guy who was quietly studying Bernie, never saying a word," says a close friend of Grey's. "Then suddenly he was running eight miles a day, losing weight, cutting his hair, and changing overnight into Bernie's partner, into a mogul—into Brad Grey." Grey then switched his attentions to the agent Michael Ovitz. "You cannot be trained for our business—you have to observe and learn," Ovitz says. "Brad is a great sponge."

Brillstein says, "If Brad is fifty per cent himself, he's thirty-five per cent me and fifteen per cent Ovitz. From me I think he learned an instinct for talent and honesty. From Ovitz he learned the ability to spin the press and the illusion of power, which is more important than power itself."

For decades in Hollywood, agents and personal managers generally had a low profile. Like Woody Allen's Broadway Danny Rose, they tended to be servile schleppers in bad suits, handlers whose role was to schmooze, and to soothe show-business egos. But in the nineteen-eighties, as Michael Ovitz became known as the most powerful man in Hollywood, these backstage figures started becoming stars in their own right, even more important in the industry food chain than their clients.



"I don't care if it's a boy or a girl, just as long as I'm healthy."

Brad Grey's route to stardom was his realization that by packaging the talent his company represented he could create his own television studio. Today, he has eight shows on the air, including the hits "Just Shoot Me" and "Politically Incorrect." And he has grown rich from a 1994 joint venture with Capital Cities/ABC, which invested more than a hundred million dollars to create Brillstein-Grey Communications, and from a ninety-million-dollar deal with Universal Studios, in 1997. Last year, Grey bought out his old mentor Brillstein. Along the way, Grey has befriended industry leaders such as David Geffen and Edgar Bronfman, Jr., and last summer he received the ultimate sanction: he was invited to the investor Herbert Allen's annual conclave of media titans in Sun Valley, Idaho.

By controlling both the talent and the production company that employs the talent, Grey has become what Lew Wasserman, the chairman of MCA, was prevented from becoming in 1962, after an antitrust investigation forced him to divest MCA's talent agency and stick to making television shows. Unlike agents, personal managers are not prohibited from producing entertainment. But by doing all this on a relatively large scale Grey has essentially become the whole food chain, leaving himself open to new kinds of conflicts of interest.

Meanwhile, Garry Shandling's fortunes were soaring, too: in the late eighties, he served as a frequent guest host for Johnny Carson and created two groundbreaking television shows, in which he starred—"It's Garry Shandling's Show" and "The Larry Sanders Show," which started airing in 1992. "Sanders," which Brillstein-Grey produces and co-owns, brought Shandling near-universal critical praise, with the *Times* certifying it as "the smartest and funniest series on television." Movie stars like Alec Baldwin and Robin Williams vied to go on the show and seem smarter by satirizing themselves.

But after Grey's hundred-million-dollar deal with ABC—a large investment for a relatively unproved producer, whose only long-lasting shows were the two with Shandling—Shandling was said to be irritated. He felt that Grey was putting his company's interest over his client's. One well-known agent recalls hearing Shandling ask plaintively, "Why does Brad have more money than me?"

By Grey's accounting—which Shandling's lawyers certainly question—Shandling has made sixteen million dollars from the "Sanders" show, while Brillstein-Grey, after paying for production-cost overruns, has netted only a million or two. "That's a lot of money for a guy in cable," Grey says of Shandling's profits.

Eventually it became Shandling's belief, and the linchpin of his claim for a hundred million dollars, that in both the ABC and the Universal deals Grey got rich by selling Shandling out. Shandling's suit claims that the transactions, particularly the ABC deal, were predicated upon Grey's promise to his new partners that he could deliver Shandling and Shandling's ideas—a promise made without Shandling's knowledge or his financial participation.

Both Ron Meyer, the president and C.O.O. of Universal Studios, and Ted Harbert, then the president of ABC Entertainment, deny that Shandling figured in their calculations. Yet one important television executive subscribes to Shandling's underlying concern. "Ideally, if you're Brad Grey and you're being paid fifteen per cent of your client's money to do what's best for him," the executive says, "you look at Garry Shandling and say, 'I can turn this guy into a television factory.' Or you do what Brad did, thinking of Brad, and you build your own television business off of Garry's back, off his cachet."

Self-interest cut the other way in 1993, when Shandling had Grey negotiate with the networks for him to host a real late-night talk show. Shandling confided to several friends that he had no intention of taking such a job, and kept negotiations going merely to generate publicity for himself and for "Sanders." But he never told his manager, and Grey discovered only much later that he'd been on a fool's errand.

In recent years, Shandling, who, like many stars, had a knack for calling with a crisis whenever his manager was on his way out the door, had noticed that Grey didn't seem as devoted. "Garry was in love with Brad," one person who knows both men well told me, "but he wanted him all to himself." Shandling, many of his former writers and producers agree, requires absolute fealty. "He had to humiliate everyone," says one writer. "He'd say, 'Come to my house Sunday at 9 A.M. to work on the script.' And you'd go, and he'd say, 'Can you come back in an hour?' And then, an hour later, 'Oh, I'm so embarrassed, I forgot something I have to do—could you just wait half an hour?' If you were still there after all that, he knew you were weak enough to work with." The writer adds, "I used to think of his corporation, How's My Hair, as the company that loves misery." (The widely remarked-upon similarities between Shandling and his character, Larry Sanders, a neurotic perfectionist who can express himself only through wincing jokes, has led Dana Carvey to routinely call Shandling "Ga-Larry.")

Grey seems to be at pains to view Shandling's complaints about his waning attentiveness as a personal issue rather than as a business matter. "I would explain to him that our success together proved that this *worked*, but that I was much more interested now in going home to see my kids than in hanging out endlessly at his house to talk about the script the writers hadn't delivered. I had heard it for so long." One writer sums it up more succinctly: "Brad got rich, and he didn't need the aggravation."

GREY dates the problems in the relationship to December, 1996, when Shandling vanished while shooting the last episode of the "Sanders" season. "Garry finished one take, and suddenly he got beet-red in the face, walked off the set, took his jacket off, and kept going out the door, into his car. It was like Scorsese's Copa scene in 'GoodFellas'—one fluid shot."

Shandling didn't return for the final day of shooting, and the episode was edited around him. "He told me he just burned out—he snapped," Peter Tolan, who wrote the episode, says. Shandling, according to colleagues, often felt that he was single-handedly keeping the ship afloat, a sentiment that the show's actors fervently share. But eight writers and producers who have worked on "Sanders" told me that Shandling, who tended to be chronically dissatisfied and withdrawn, was the show's chief production problem.

For his part, Shandling felt that the writing staff never helped him enough. And he began to think of Grey in the same light, complaining that Grey wasn't earning the fifty-thousand-dollar executive producer's fee he received for each episode. Many "Sanders" staff members say that Grey's involvement after the first two seasons, when Brillstein-Grey regularly booked its own clients on the fledgling show, was minimal. "Brad Grey was a mandarin, a collector of information and a creator of nothing," says one former "Sanders" producer. "He would have kept his height to himself if he could."

Shandling, after walking off the set, spent three weeks in Hawaii and Fiji. Grey says, "He had told me that last day on the set, 'I'm dying here, I'm dying.' I thought it was just an expression. He just had to get through four more monologue jokes and one more day's shooting. But he later told me he truly meant it—that he thought he was going to die, and I should have known that. And he said that John Ziffren"—the show's producer—"whom he'd also told that to, should have sent him home, and because he hadn't, he could never trust John again as a human being." Ziffren had produced the show for five years in harmony with Shandling, but he quit because of the incident. Sounding extremely pained, Ziffren told me, "I did everything I could *not* to disappoint Garry, and I'm very sorry I did, like everyone else."

Grey's bottom-line approach may have been what a good businessman does, but, as Shandling evidently felt, it was not the way a friend—or a careful nurturer of clients—behaves. Handling talent means handling the difficulties, and providing constant support and reassurance. The successful handler makes sure that Marlon Brando gets his hamburgers in Tahiti; assures Roseanne that her grabbing her crotch while singing the national anthem was a bold creative choice; helps Martin Lawrence explain that it was "exhaustion" that made him wander into traffic while carrying a gun. But Brad Grey felt he had grown beyond that role.

In Fiji, Shandling stayed, as he often did, with his friend Gavin de Becker, a personal security consultant and the author of the best-selling book "The Gift of Fear." De Becker disputes the apparently indisputable premise that Shandling walked off the show. "Garry Shandling is the producer and star of that show," de Becker told me. "So there is no 'supposed to' about coming to work the next day. He has no time sheets." Jeffrey Tambor, who plays Sanders' sidekick Hank, agrees: "Hey, man, it's Garry's ballgame."

When de Becker was asked about Grey's assertion that Shandling had some sort of crisis, he laughed. "You can say that de Becker laughed on hearing that characterization," he said. "He wasn't being wheeled around like Hannibal Lecter. While he was here, he swam like an athlete, he snorkelled, he laughed, and he edited two episodes of the show." The idea that Shandling was unstrung, de Becker says, "is fully malodorous bullshit."

The next time Grey saw his client was in February, when the two had an emotional meeting in Grey's office. Grey recalls, "Garry said, 'You don't care about me, about who I am.' Finally, I said, 'I don't want this energy in my life. We should end this.' He got tears in his eyes. 'You don't want to work through this?' he said. And I said, 'I have a *wife* to work through this stuff with. I don't want to go into couples therapy with you.'" Though the two patched it up, "it was never the same," Grey says.

Through his attorney, Jonathan Schiller, Shandling denies that Grey sought to end their alliance. He says that the meeting was difficult only because Shandling demanded an explanation of accounting discrepancies suggesting that Grey had been secretly taking commissions on Shandling's "Sanders" fees. (Grey denies taking any such commissions.)

A few months later, Shandling hired an outside lawyer, Barry Hirsch, to look into all his contractual dealings with Grey. Shandling later alleged that the clearest proof that Grey was bilking him was that Grey always discouraged him from hiring a lawyer, saying, "Don't you trust me?" Grey says with a faint smile, "If I told Garry Shandling not to get a lawyer, the very first thing he would do is get a lawyer."

HOLLYWOOD is honeycombed with divided and overlapping loyalties. "Unless you're Colonel Parker and you only represent one client, Elvis Presley," Ron Meyer, of Universal, says, "there's always the potential for conflict."

"I don't think that anybody knows where the line on conflict is anymore," says Jon Vitti, a former "Sanders" writer, who is mentioned in Shandling's lawsuit as one of the writers Brillstein-Grey "diverted" to write a pilot. Vitti says that the charge is "true, to a degree, but whether it's a legally meaningful degree I don't know." The contract he signed with Brillstein-Grey when he was hired at "Sanders" stipulated that he write a pilot for the company. The conflict, in other words, was built in. Grey argues that "Sanders" had so few episodes (about fifteen a year, compared with the usual twenty-two) that he had to make overall deals with some top writers so that he could pay the going rate of $1.5 million a year.

Shandling was not pleased that several "Sanders" writers went on to create successful TV series for Brillstein-Grey. "I always assumed that Garry was getting a cut from Brad's other shows because he'd trained the writers in his comedy college here," says Rip Torn, who plays Larry Sanders' fierce producer, Artie. "He should have been Brad's president of development." The bloodiest battle of all occurred when Paul Simms, the valued head writer of "Sanders," quit and created the NBC show "NewsRadio" for Brillstein-Grey. Shandling threatened to sue, but he backed down when Simms stood firm. "I said to Brad, 'Fine, I'd rather spend the next three years in court than spend another day working at the "Sanders" show,' " Simms told me.

HORSE

I've never seen a soul detached from its gender,
but I'd like to. I'd like to see my own that way,
free of its female tethers. Maybe it would be like
riding a horse. The rider's the human one,
but everyone looks at the horse.

—Chase Twichell

The moment Grey began producing TV shows as well as managing talent, he entered a world of clashing responsibilities. "At ABC," Ted Harbert says, "we knew that Brad was often in a tough position, representing the interests of the joint venture, his TV company, and his client at the same time. But there's no hiding here—the conflicts are all out in the open."

For instance, Grey arranged for his television studio to pay Shandling two million dollars to consult on pilot scripts from 1994 to 1997, in part because, he says, Shandling needed money after sinking nearly seven million dollars into his house and later settling a palimony claim and a sexual-discrimination suit with an ex-girlfriend and former "Sanders" cast member, Linda Doucett. (Shandling's lawyer denies that his client was having financial problems, and says that Grey misrepresented the terms of the deal.) Grey took a ten-per-cent commission on the deals: deals that he'd made with his own production company, using ABC's money—a curious arrangement. Grey defends the commission, and adds more generally, "Partnerships in Hollywood bleed all the time. It's a business of relationships, and this happens every week all over town."

Some of the disputes could probably have been avoided if Shandling had had his own TV production company; his writers could then have been launching new shows that enriched Shandling instead of just Brillstein-Grey. Grey says that he suggested this to Shandling last spring, offering him twenty million dollars over four years to create two prime-time shows a year. But, according to Shandling's attorney, all Grey offered was another consulting deal. In August, Shandling said that he was "uncomfortable" with $1.2 million in commissions that Grey had taken on Shandling's consulting fees from ABC and on roughly twelve million dollars that HBO had paid Shandling in "exclusivity fees," to supplement his various creative fees connected with the "Sanders" show. This issue became the tipping point in the two men's relationship.

"I thought the commission was completely appropriate," Grey says, "but I said fine. I didn't want him to be unhappy." Grey agreed to write Shandling a check for $1.2 million, and Shandling joined Grey and his family in Hawaii for two days. "I said to Brad, 'I think you're making a really big mistake,' " a powerful friend of Grey's says. " 'It'll be thrown back in your face in a lawsuit, and it'll look like you're admitting guilt.' This decision wasn't coming from a good business place—it was coming from a personal place of wanting to make Garry feel better."

And, normally, making a client feel better would have been good business sense for a personal manager. But the personal and the business strands of Grey and Shandling's eighteen-year relationship had begun to unravel. "It felt good to Garry to get that kind of money returned," Gavin de Becker says, "but it didn't feel good over all. Garry began immediately to ask more questions. You hire a lawyer, the lawyer has trouble getting documents from your manager, then the manager returns $1.2 million right after you ask for it? That doesn't smell right."

At the first read-through for the new "Sanders" season, in October, Grey says, Shandling cut him dead. "I got in my car, and I knew that was it," he says. "I sent a letter resigning as Garry's manager. It felt really sad, because even though I knew it was best for him and for me, it felt disloyal, and I pride myself on my loyalty."

As Grey shapes the narrative, the next thing he knew was that Shandling's lawyer told his lawyer that he was going to be sued. Grey says that Shandling's agent later suggested that his client might drop the suit for ten million dollars. (Schiller denies this.) But Grey didn't pursue settlement talks. For some weeks, in fact, Grey's own lawyer, Bert Fields, had been urging Grey to sue Shandling for libel.

A January draft of the potential libel suit shows that Grey worried that Shandling had begun "a campaign of malicious falsehood and character assassination" against him with the media and with Brillstein-Grey clients. The draft alleges that Shandling was saying he had fired Grey for fraud, and declares that those calumnies would ruin Grey's reputation and cost Brillstein-Grey in excess of "the sum of $25 million." In the margin alongside a passage describing Shandling's alleged abuse of "Sanders" personnel, Grey had scrawled, and then crossed out, "In addition to pattern and history with ex-friends, accountants, part-actors, architects, agents, fiancees, decorators, producers, directors, etc. Now it's me, which leaves him to live his life alone, angry and bitter."

But Shandling filed first, on January 15th. Fields says that Grey had already decided, as a matter of strategy, "to let Garry be the one to explode this thing." Many in Hollywood had been unaware of the strains—"When I read about the lawsuit," says the "Sanders" actor Rip Torn, "I thought it must be a publicity stunt for the new season." Grey braced himself for a pillorying. "I was concerned for my business after what I read in the newspapers," he says, "but, honestly, I got very emotional when I saw the response, with Bill Maher, Lorne Michaels, Dana Carvey, and so on calling out of friendship." The fact that Grey, feeling betrayed by his friend, was still happy to mix business and pleasure says a lot about relationships being the best currency in Hollywood. "Brad Pitt came over to my house to bring me a Tiffany lamp," he recalls, smiling, "and he said, 'We're going to hang out.' I'm much older than Brad, but he gave me a talk about life. He said, 'Listen, people are going to disappoint you.' And that's right."

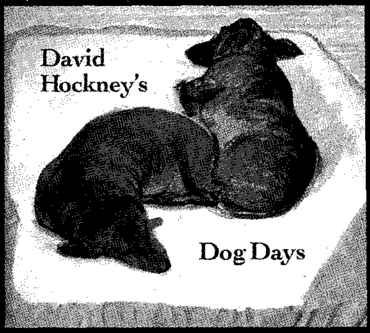
Grey's friends are urging him to settle and move on. One writer who had a contractual dispute with Shandling says, "You don't play chicken with a guy who's strapping his foot to the gas pedal." Grey says, "I would probably advise someone in my position to settle. On a business level, I can make that case all day long. But I guess I'm still too emotionally engaged."

Shandling's friends say that he seems revitalized by the struggle, and that this final season of "Larry Sanders" is the best yet. The hour-long farewell show, airing May 31st, features an extraordinary roster of talent, mustered without Brillstein-Grey's help, including Warren Beatty, Sean Penn, Tim Allen, Jim Carrey, Jerry Seinfeld, Ellen DeGeneres, David Duchovny, and Greg Kinnear. "Garry's much more creatively fertile," Peter Tolan says. "Go figure—maybe he feels he's taken control of his life."

"This has been a lesson for me," Grey told me at the end of a three-and-a-half-hour conversation. "But I'm not sure I know what it is yet. I guess my mistake with Garry was that I actually thought he was my friend, and that he was happy for me as I was growing. But as his manager I should have known what was going on with his feelings." He drank some Evian and said intently, "I was blind to it because he was part of my world. Maybe, as I spent more time with my kids, maybe, as Warren said, he felt I didn't love him enough."

David Geffen, who has seen an enormous wash of ambition and vexation throughout his long career in entertainment, and who has himself been sued by a client, draws a much simpler moral: "Never invite your artists to your house if it's bigger than theirs." ◆

The Love of a Master (Painter) for His Dogs



David Hockney's
Dog Days

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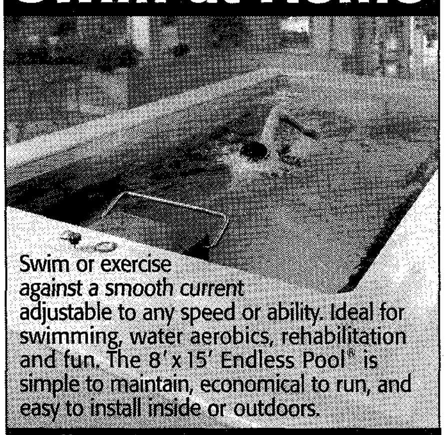
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PROFILE

THE POLITICS OF FAME

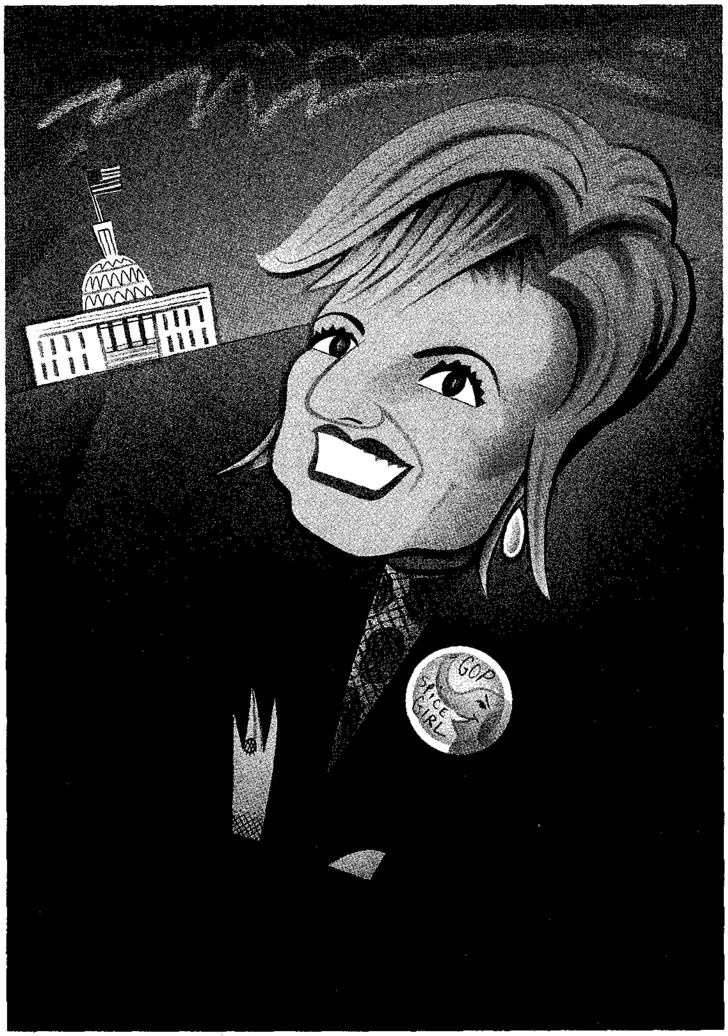
How did Arianna Huffington, once Newt Gingrich's golden girl, become the comedic protégée of Al Franken and Bill Maher?

BY MARGARET TALBOT

EDITH WHARTON and Henry James understood the pleasures of watching a beautiful arriviste ascend and fall and then ascend again. (So, for that matter, do Judith Krantz and Sidney Sheldon.) This type of heroine, born with more ambition than advantage, turns every setback into an occasion to exercise her nerve and her powers of reinvention. It helps to think of Arianna Huffington as such a character—as a political and social picaresque who is both brashly self-confident and naïvely impressionable. The daughter of a Greek journalist, Huffington, who at forty-seven is tall and striking, with vivid red hair, moved as a teen-ager from Athens to London, where her doting mother thought that she and her younger sister could improve their prospects. Huffington has been a star debater at Cambridge University, a gossipy biographer of Maria Callas and Pablo Picasso, an avid socialite in London and New York, a devotee of a peculiar New Age guru, and the striving wife of a lacklustre politician. Most recently, she has cast herself as a kind of Republican Spice Girl—an endearingly ditzy right-wing gal-about-town who is a guilty pleasure for people who know better. "I'm the kind of person who throws herself into something and then it's done," says Huffington, whose divorce from Michael Huffington, the heir to an oil and gas fortune, became final last summer, and who now lives in Los Angeles with the couple's two daughters. "It becomes repetitive. So when I lived in New York, in the late eighties, that was my social period and I was out every night, and then, three years later, I couldn't wait to get off the merry-go-round. I've been here in L.A. since July, and my life is getting up at six to write and practically going to sleep with the children." These days, Huffington, who has often criticized the press, describes herself as "primarily a columnist, a political satirist, and a mother." It may be her canniest incarnation yet.

For the past three years, Huffington has written a twice-weekly column, which is syndicated in about a hundred papers. When I visited her in early March, she was finishing a dispatch on the resignation of Representative Bill Paxon, of upstate New York, who was once thought to be a likely successor to House Speaker Newt Gingrich. Paxon had announced that he wanted to spend more time with his family, but few in Washington seemed to believe him. Huffington phoned Paxon and said as much, in a voice both soothing and insistent. She had read the galleys of an upcoming book by his wife, Susan Molinari, in which Paxon is described as a man who truly loves politics. What would make such a man say he'll never, ever, run for office again? Was he pressured to leave—perhaps by his onetime rival for the speakership, Dick Armey?

Huffington later told me (and would tell her readers the next day), "I don't like it when politicians use their children as an excuse. It's so cynical. And it's infantilizing to the American people, as if they couldn't handle the truth." She poured a cup of tea from a pot discreetly produced by a female assistant, and offered a platter of artfully arranged crudités. Huffington's office, which is in her handsome new Italianate house, in Brentwood, suggests a set designer's idea of the writer's lair. (You could imagine one of those plummy columnists once played in the movies by Clifton Webb or George Sanders working here.) Against one wall is a floor-to-ceiling fireplace of carved mahogany; against another is an overstuffed couch in red-and-gold brocade. The room also holds a vast Oriental carpet, a vast desk, and a vast mirrored armoire. A spiral staircase leads up to a secret, panelled door, which opens to reveal a standard-issue gray-and-white office, complete with fax machine and filing cabinets, and two full-time assistants—rumpled, handsome, studiously ironic young men introduced to me as Josh and Andrew. "It would have been easier for me to stay in Washington, where I already had an office set up in my place in Georgetown," Huffington explained. "But Michael lives here, and I wanted the children to be near him after the divorce." One of the assistants stopped by with a phone message, and Huffington beamed at him and said, laughing, "Besides, I would never have met Josh otherwise."



"She's fearless," says Michael Kinsley, who credits Huffington with his scariest moment on TV.

ROBERT RISKO

As only the third woman—and the first foreigner—to be elected president of the Cambridge Union, a prestigious debating society, Huffington was already well known in London when she came down from university, in 1971. She published an anti-feminist polemic, "The Female Woman," but conservatism was unchic at the time, and she was "careful to present herself not as right-wing but as different, unpredictable, which allowed her a sort of silken deniability," says the journalist Christopher Hitchens, who knew her during that period. The satiric magazine *Private Eye*, which had fun with Huffington's accent, her indefatigable appearances on British quiz shows like "Call My Bluff" and "Face the Music," and her romance with the august London *Times* columnist Bernard Levin, took to referring to her as "the Greek Pudding."

Her press in California was harsher four years ago, when Michael Huffington ran for the Senate against Dianne Feinstein, spending a record twenty-eight million dollars and losing by a hair. Reporters questioned whether the low-wattage candidate was a mere proxy for his ambitious wife, because it was Arianna who sat in for her husband in many of the primary-season debates and Arianna who seemed to crave victory.

Now, however, many of those journalists admit that they have grown to like Huffington, in part because she is generous with tips and sources. "She functions sort of like a responsible Matt Drudge," Hanna Rosin, a political reporter for *The New Republic*, says. "She goes to cocktail parties with her Republican friends and she asks a lot of questions, and then she tells reporters what she's heard there." She has even broken a few stories. Huffington was the first to report, in 1997, that the Democratic donor Larry Lawrence was not entitled to be buried in Arlington National Cemetery, because he had lied about his war record. (Lawrence's widow is suing Huffington over a column that repeated rumors that Mrs. Lawrence—whom Huffington referred to as a "merry widow"—had had a sexual liaison with the President.)

Still, the key to Huffington's new popularity among journalists may be that she is now eager to savage Republicans as well as Democrats. In the heady days of the Contract with America, she was spotted all over Washington with Newt Gingrich and became the unofficial hostess of the right-wing revolution. But roughly a year into his term she turned on the Speaker and began campaigning for his ouster. Huffington explains the rift in ideological terms, saying that, though Gingrich used to talk about the "moral imperative of fighting poverty being greater than that of balancing the budget," she believes he lost sight of that goal amid Party squabbles and "meaningless bipartisanship." But one acquaintance speculates that she may have broken with Gingrich for another reason. "When Newt became Speaker," this person says, "Arianna thought she could function as a sort of surrogate First Lady for him, since his own wife, Marianne, didn't seem to relish taking on a public role. It didn't work out that way, which probably made it easier for her to become a vociferous Newt critic." Or it may just be that Huffington, a serial protégée of messianic men such as John-Roger, the New Age mystic, simply sensed that the Republican revolution had wound down, and grew tired of Gingrich's emotional outbursts and failed diets.

Several editors and reporters say that in recent months Huffington has called them gleefully with leads on anti-Newt stories. Meanwhile, in her own column, she has written about Gingrich's ethics violations and about vicious competition among his self-appointed successors, and has accused one of his closest advisers, Joe Gaylord, of political dirty

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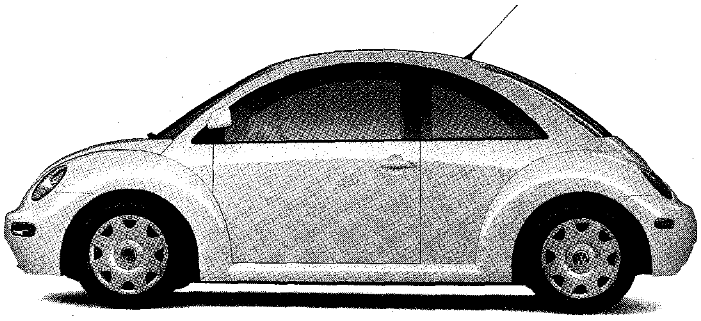

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tricks. Some of her jabs have been quite pointed. In a Christmas column, for instance, she promised to give the Speaker, "in addition to the two personal trainers he had in 1997, a personality trainer for 1998," and went on to say, "Also, in anticipation of his presidential campaign, a map to all the places where his favorability ratings are above 18 percent—including local zoos."

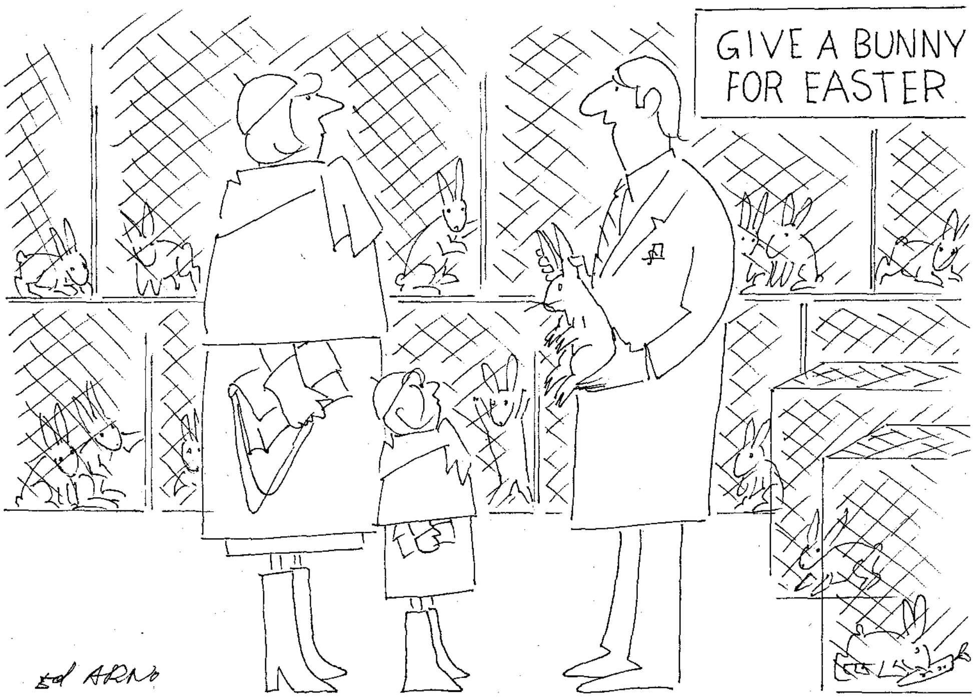
In other columns, Huffington has described Dan Quayle as a "generic Republican" with a "tired" message and Dick Armey as having an "ersatz, insipid, and duplicitous style," and remarked that Bob Dole's idea of "leading a revolution" meant "borrowing a bottle of Grecian Formula." Such statements would have endeared her to liberal journalists even if she hadn't lately made a point of flattering them and dropping their names. "I know she's a self-promoter, and I know she's relentlessly attention-seeking," a left-leaning political reporter says. "But I love to see her up on the dais at these conservative confabs where in speech after speech everybody's lambasting the liberal media and whining about how embattled and long-suffering they are. I saw Arianna get up at a couple of these things and say, in this lustrous Greek accent, 'Stop complaining, you babies. It's not the press's fault. We have no programs! We have no policies! We're intellectually bankrupt!' "

"She's really sort of fearless," says Michael Kinsley, the editor of *Slate* and a liberal columnist, and he tells the following story. A few months ago, he was the host of a "Firing Line" debate on China, in which Huffington argued, against Henry Kissinger, that the United States should not renew China's most-favored-nation trade status. Kinsley recalls, "She launched into this fierce attack on Kissinger, saying, 'You're just soft on China because you have business interests there.' It looked as if Kissinger were either going to storm off the set or burst into tears. It was the scariest moment I've ever had on TV."

ALTHOUGH these days Huffington comes off as an amalgam of Lenny Bruce and Zsa Zsa Gabor, she was not previously known for her sense of humor. Her biographies of Callas and Picasso were dismissed as bombastic and rather scurrilous. The comedy writer Harry Shearer recalls that when he first met Huffington, on a cable show in 1992, she was still in an earnest New Age phase, and struck him as "ardent, cogent, and kind of bizarre." Now, says Shearer, who has become a friend, she seems to have quit "suppressing the urge to say rude and funny things." This is apparent in her new career in television comedy, and in her latest book, "Greetings from the Lincoln Bedroom." The book is an absurdist romp in which Huffington imagines herself transported to "the White House of Johnny Chung and Monica Lewinsky" for a three-day stay. As humor, it only intermittently hits the mark. In this fantasy, Socks talks: "Why does he need a frisky intern? Why does he need a chocolate Lab? Why does he have to be all things to all animals?" The TV talks, too, and complains bitterly about the White House décor: "Imagine what your house would look like if you had fourteen Midwestern grandmothers . . . and you were their least favorite grandchild . . . and they all died at once . . . and they all remembered you in their will." There's a wicked parody of a Maya Angelou poem: "The History of Time. . . . A stone, a bush, a mountain, another stone, some more bushes, a mastodon, wait! A third stone." But the witty riffs jostle with plenty of remarkably tasteless humor of the Beavis and Butt-head variety.

Huffington has two explanations for her new career as a comedienne. The first is cultural: she says she came of age in the England of Monty Python and "That Was the Week That Was," and so is attuned to a type of humor "that is very different from late-night jokes." But when she talks about being funny she sounds a distinctly un-English note of self-seriousness. "It's political satire as a form of dissent. I respond to that even if I don't agree with the target, if it's born out of passion, anger, outrage, a sense of injustice, and a sense of wanting things to be different."

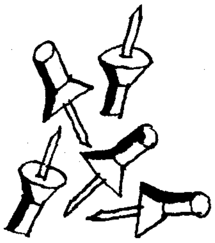
The second explanation is biographical, and dates back to 1996, when Comedy Central recruited Huffington to appear with the former "Saturday Night Live" writer Al Franken in "Strange Bedfellows." Introduced as part of the cable network's coverage of the Democratic and Republican National Conventions, the feature shows Arianna, in a negligee, tucked into an oversized bed with Franken, who is wearing red-white-and-blue plaid pajamas. One of the running gags


GIVE A BUNNY FOR EASTER
Ed Arno

"For a slight additional charge, we'll take it back after Easter."

is that Franken will sell out his principles—"You know, Arianna, on the way to the Convention today I was thinking to myself that the liberal social-welfare state has trapped billions of children into a cycle of dependency and poverty"—just to get in her nightie.

Franken and Huffington were covering the Republican Convention when Michael Huffington's former campaign manager, Ed Rollins, published his memoir, "Bare Knuckles and Back Rooms: My Life in American Politics," in which he portrayed Michael as a "colorless" guy prodded into politics by his charming but unscrupulous wife. She had, Rollins charged, hired detectives to ferret out a Guatemalan former maid of Dianne Feinstein's and to dig into the background of Maureen Orth, a journalist who had written a particularly devastating story about her in *Vanity Fair*.



Arianna's first reaction was "total anger, fury." Today, denying Rollins's charges, she says, "I wanted to sue." But her new comedy friends, Franken and Bill Maher, who had begun to invite Huffington onto "Politically Incorrect," his late-night talk show, advised her to make a joke of it. They began referring to her as "the beautiful but evil Arianna," and requested that if she sent spies snooping around *their* houses while they were gone she should at least have the spies make sure the cats had been fed. Huffington got the point. "I thought, Yes, just keep joking and laughing," she says. She began slyly to mock the charges without actually addressing their substance—a sort of postmodern, self-conscious strategy for taming an embarrassing past. When Franken, still trying to win over his haughty bedmate, pleads, "My wife doesn't understand me. She's not even interested in politics," Arianna replies, "Unfortunately, neither is my husband."

Since the election, she has appeared with Franken at the Toyota Comedy Festival in New York and the Food Distributors' Convention in Orlando, Florida. Last year, when Representative Dennis Kucinich, a Democrat who represents Cleveland, was asked to speak at the National Press Club's annual roast, in Washington, he called the team of Huffington and Franken for advice. (His speech—a parody of Gingrich's college course, in which he posits the kielbasa, the polka, and the bowling alley as the great civilizing forces of the American nation—was, by all accounts, the funniest of the evening.)

Huffington has also become a sharp-tongued regular on "Politically Incorrect," and last year she struck a deal with Comedy Central to create a program of her own. Franken and Maher, like Harry Shearer, have become pals of hers. Huffington "turns out to be a lot more trustworthy and generous and loyal than a lot of Hollywood liberals," Shearer says. "Is she ever going to be a professional humorist? No. But she can be witty."

The acknowledgments in "Greetings from the Lincoln Bedroom" suggest that Huffington's new circle of funny friends is wide indeed. Billy Kimball, a comedy producer, is thanked for his "help in structuring and shaping the book." The humor writer Stephen Sherrill gets credit for "bringing his biting wit to bear on the manuscript." Billy Diamond and Seth Greenland, "two professional funny dads" from her daughter Isabella's class, offered "many valuable suggestions." There may not have been time to enlist these helpers when the Lewinsky scandal broke. Huffington, who had just turned in her manuscript, took it back and spent two frantic weeks larding it with references to bodacious interns and oral sex—few of them very funny, and some of them merely crude. (Among the new chapter titles are "Just One Orgasm Away from the Presidency" and "Pussy Galore.")

IT is clear to anyone watching Huffington these day that her comedy apprenticeship has fine-tuned her sense of timing, even when she is trying to be a semi-serious talking head. In L.A., she does a weekly radio show that matches her, the right-winger, against a self-described centrist policy wonk, Matt Miller, and a veteran leftist journalist, Robert Scheer, who writes columns for the Los Angeles *Times* and *The Nation*. Arianna likes to say that she and Scheer have an "understanding," because they are both so "passion-

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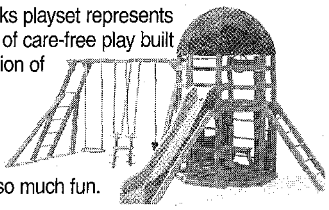
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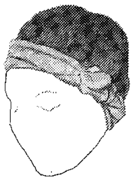
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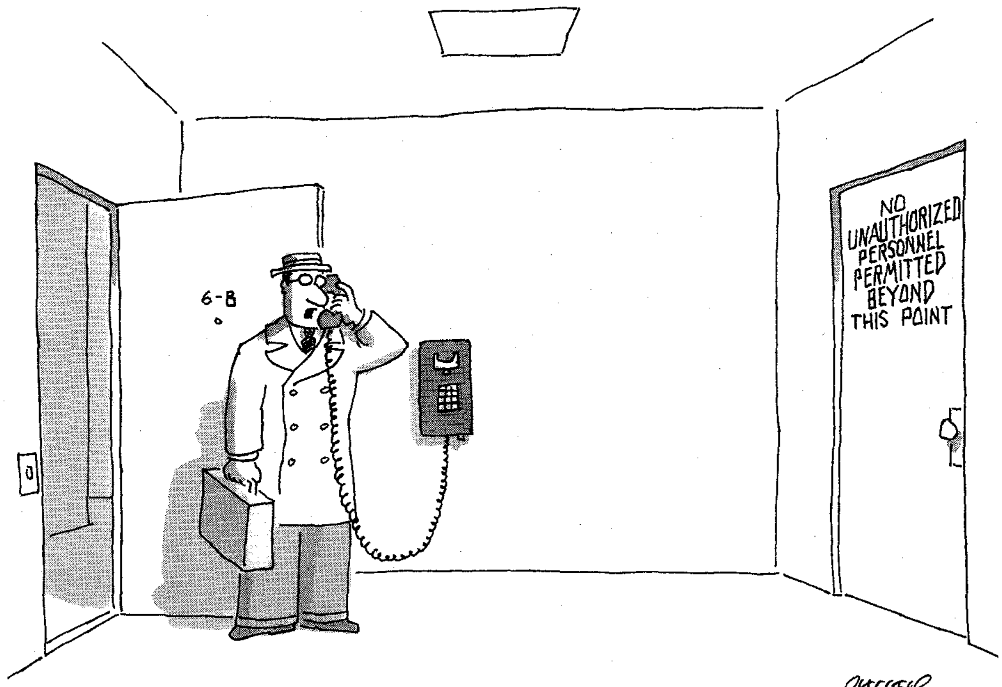
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"Honey, I'm home."

ate"—a favorite word of hers—about what they believe. "We debate about everything and we really love each other," she says. "I can talk to him about my divorce and about personal things. It's Matt, the one in the middle, we don't understand. We sort of gang up on him."

The bearded, gruffly charming Scheer has become one of her closest L.A. friends. (On his advice, she enrolled her children—Christina, aged eight, and Isabella, aged six—at the same progressive private school, in Santa Monica, that one of his two sons attends.) And when I watched the show being taped live before a well-heeled, civic-minded luncheon audience, it was Scheer and Huffington who gobbled up most of the airtime, flirtatiously rebuking one another. Scheer marshalled facts and figures and favored direct attacks. Huffington's much touted "effective compassion," which argues that the private sector can be prevailed upon to solve the problems of the poor, was "Mickey Mouse," he declared. Huffington, who specializes in the deft aside and the one-line comeback, subtly undermined him with remarks like "That's not what you said at dinner the other night, Bob." (After the show, Scheer said to Huffington, in a nettled voice, "Why did you make that reference to dinner? You always do that.")

If Americans don't really care about the Lewinsky scandal, she asked rhetorically at one point, then why was it on the front page every day? "Because sex sells, that's why," Scheer retorted.

"Then why don't they just put Pamela Anderson and Tommy Lee on the cover every day?" Huffington shot back. It was a flip line, but it got a big laugh, because she had gauged the crowd just right: these were the sort of people who prided themselves on recognizing tacky pop-cultural references and being above them at the same time.

"I think the attacks on Arianna are irrational," Scheer told me earlier, over lunch. "They come out of envy, cattiness. She's a serious person. I just think she's in bed with some bad people. I went to a few of her parties and there were some very ghoulish people there." As it happens, many of the friends Huffington has made in L.A. are lifelong Democrats, and some of them think she is undergoing an ideological shift. Huffington herself says, in her slinky way, that "the right / left divisions are so outdated now. For me, the primary division is between people who are aware of what I call 'the two nations' (rich and poor), and those who are not." She says it pains her that even the most modest initiatives to promote conservative compassion—a charitable tax credit, for instance—never seem to make it out of committee. "The fire, the passion for these issues is just not there in the Republican leadership," she says, with a sigh.

Perhaps Huffington will eventually move to the left out of sheer pique. Upon being reminded, for example, that the campaign-spending reforms she supports so vigorously would have prevented her ex-husband from entering the race for the Senate, she says, "That would have been a good thing. In fact, I think there should be *retroactive* campaign-finance reform." Her life as a political spouse, she says, seems "like a long, long time ago," and she sounds enormously relieved that it's over. "I don't know how anyone can do it, unless we construe the role very differently. Because basically a political wife is expected to have no other view than the candidate's." In this case, though, the candidate seemed to have had no view other than his wife's. About her divorce, Huffington says she feels guilty because of the children but not angry at her ex-husband. "We married late; we had our children late; there was no other man and no other woman; this was not a bitter divorce. We had no reason for not arranging things in a way that would not damage our children any more than we already had by getting divorced."

IN many ways, Huffington appears to be reprising, on the dinner-theatre circuit, the role Clare Boothe Luce played so well. Luce was also a glamorous and shrewd woman, whose unremitting ambition for fame did more to make her famous than any particular talent did. Like Luce, Huffington is constantly finding new venues in which to display herself. Last month, she launched a Web site. ("In cyberspace," the press release says, "nobody can hear your accent.") She has managed to become, as Daniel Boorstin put it, known for being well known—or, as *Buzz* magazine recently said, "Cool for no Good Reason."

For the moment, her household is a matriarchy. Her mother, Elli, who is seventy-six years old, lives with her and dotes on the kids, and presses sweets on Arianna's visitors, who tend to ask her for career and relationship advice. Arianna's younger sister, Agapi, is an actress who lives in New York and often tours in a one-woman show about the Greek goddesses, and she comes to stay whenever she can. Right now, Huffington says, she is content to be single. "It's almost as if Mother Nature protects you as a mother and protects your children. You almost don't want— You're almost barricaded against it. Because I know there would be nothing more devastating than bringing another man into their lives." Later, she adds, "There is something that we don't talk about enough. It's that when your children are young it's such a sensual relationship. Part of the relationship with a man is just the sensuality—the touching, the holding—and it might sound strange to say it, but so much of that is fulfilled with young children."

When her daughters return from school, they bound through the high-ceilinged marble entryway and into their mother's office. Isabella takes her mother's face between her hands and coils her lanky body around her like a vine. Christina puts her feet in her mother's lap and begins to cry, because she's fallen to second place in her math class. Huffington is close to both her daughters, but it's Christina, the perfectionist, who seems poised to carry on in her mother's style. A few days ago, Huffington found a notebook page on which Christina had scrawled a series of talking points about current events: "1) Bill Clinton is accused of flandering. 2) Monica said she needed to give a note to Bill and she then had sex with him (we think) 3) Monica used to be fat. Monica's parents got divorced when she was little 4) Bill and Monica are going to have a trile." And underneath this list are a drawing of the White House and the words "The Art of . . . Sex." ♦

DEPT. OF STRAIGHT THINKING

[*From the Mamaroneck Daily Times*]

Sharpton said earlier yesterday he will challenge the outcome in court regardless of the outcome.

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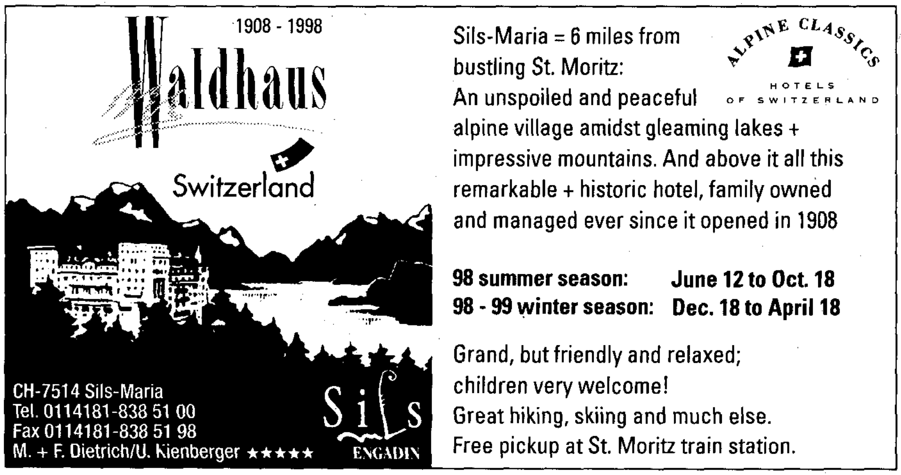
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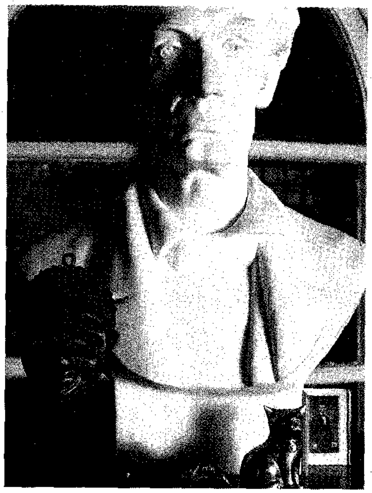
REFLECTIONS

THE GREAT IMPRESARIO

The author came to know Lincoln Kirstein in his last years and found the man who brought ballet to New York City as immense and mysterious as his achievements.

BY NICHOLAS JENKINS



GEORGE PLATT LYNES/DANCE COLLECTION, NYPL; OBERTO GILI/HOUSE & GARDEN

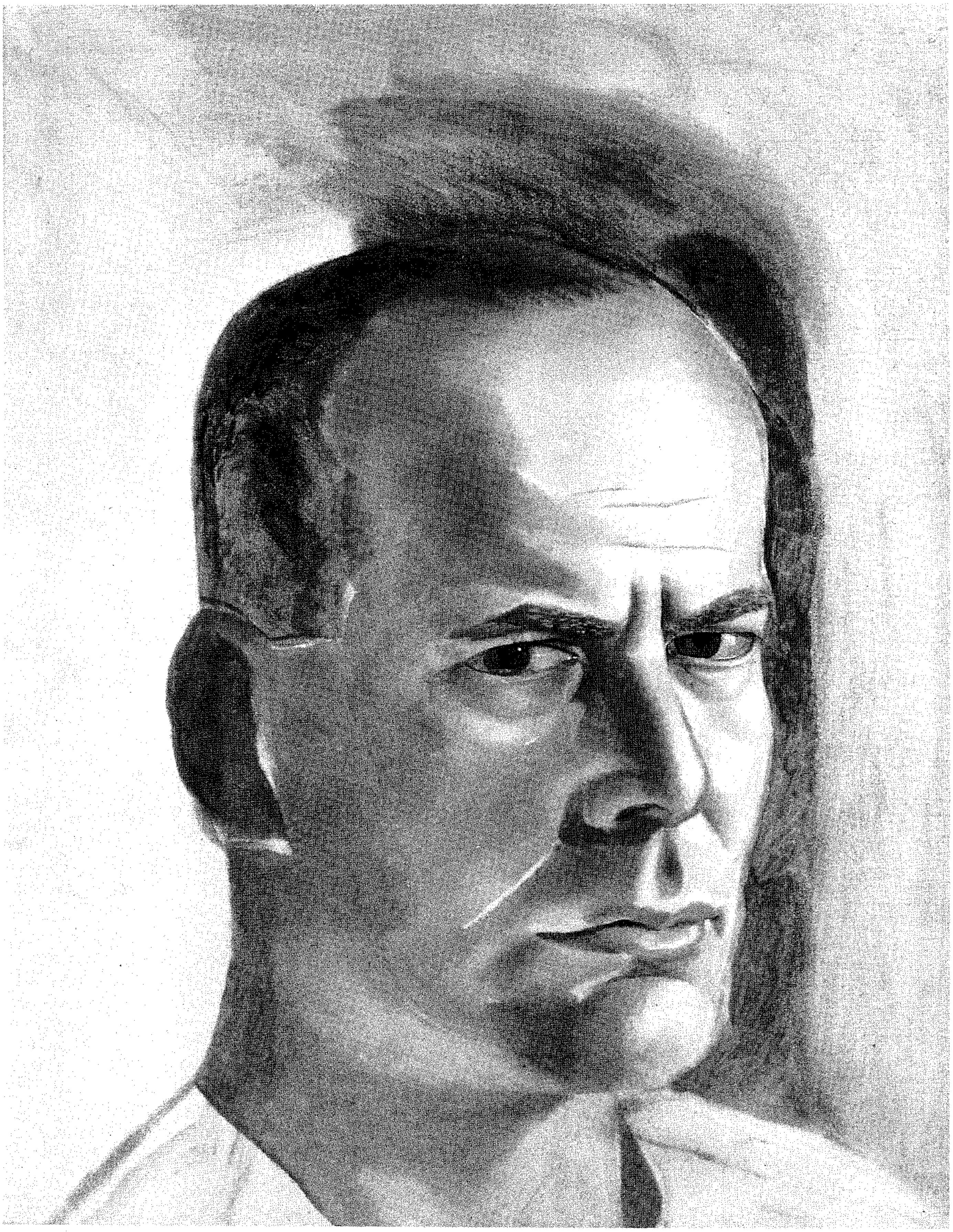
When you stepped into Lincoln Kirstein's East Nineteenth Street house, near Gramercy Park, one of the first things you noticed (once your startled eyes had adjusted to the pervasive shadowiness of the interior) was a small, gilded Art Deco sylph in the room on the right, straining toward you on tiptoe as she eternally proffered a tray for *cartes de visite.* Nobody carries such cards now, of course, but a card was always lying there, as if someone had left it just five minutes before you arrived. You had to stoop slightly to see that the black print on the hardly yellowed rectangle gave no address, just a name: "Serge de Diaghilev." The arrangement was a miniaturized, mocking, and self-mocking coup de théâtre, staged by Kirstein for his private enjoyment. But it also seemed to prepare you for the oddly fluid atmosphere that surrounded this enigmatic American impresario.

This year, Kirstein and George Balanchine's New York City Ballet—the world's greatest dance company—celebrates its fiftieth anniversary. But to ponder such an extraordinary feat of survival and dominance in the evanescent world of ballet, and to acknowledge how much Kirstein, America's noblest ballet scholar and dance visionary, did to bring it about, is hardly even to begin to grasp the range of his achievements. He was also an art critic, a poet, a kind of entrepreneurial anti-entrepreneur ("I'm in the business to lose money!" is how he cheerfully put it), an unofficial ambassador, a patron, a polemicist—all in all, a massive presence in American culture.

Kirstein laid down his life for classical ballet—hustling, animating, inspiring, bullying, dreaming in the service of his great cause. He contributed almost all his imagination, intellect, energy, and money (along with the personal courage necessary to endure, as he once said, "real and constant anxiety, three nervous breakdowns, bankruptcies, etc.") to the co-creation, with Balanchine, of twentieth-century ballet's most important institutions, the City Ballet and the affiliated School of American Ballet. Together, Kirstein and Balanchine labored to create and then perpetuate a basis for classical dance in a country where none had really existed before they arrived on the scene. "Season after season," Kirstein wrote admiringly of his collaborator's Shakespearean prodigality, "works were on order, like fresh skirts, shirts, ties, and trousers, to tempt the new, while satisfying old subscribers, to ensure in advance fiscal security and practical continuity."

Over half a lifetime, Kirstein seemed to subordinate everything to the genius of Balanchine. In 1983, he wrote to the English dance writer Richard Buckle, "There was only one director—Balanchine—and everything good and bad that happened to us in fifty years is due only to him." Forcefully, insistently, Kirstein censored himself as a personality. "I am a kind of steward for a mechanism that does control certain things," he said, "but I never think I'm any more than that." And yet he loved to tell how Diaghilev ("the king of the arts," as he called him) was accosted by the King of Spain during a backstage visit. "Who are you?" the monarch demanded brusquely. Diaghilev's mild reply was "Like you, Sire, I am indispensable."

But the differences between Kirstein and Diaghilev were as important as the similarities, a fact made emblematic by the two men's funerals. Diaghilev, after his death, in 1929, at the age of fifty-seven, was ferried to the Venetian church of San Giorgio in an enormous black gondola encrusted with gilt, a huge catafalque planted like a throne in its center. (As if responding unconsciously to



Opposite: George Balanchine, Francisco Moncion, and Tanaquil LeClercq; a bust of Abraham Lincoln; and Balanchine and Kirstein. Above: Lucian Freud's portrait of Kirstein. "The glare of his glare," the author writes, made him seem even more gigantic.

a historic call to action, the young Harvardite Kirstein, on summer holiday in Italy, stumbled unwittingly into the middle of the obsequies.) Conversely, Kirstein died peacefully at his New York home, at the age of eighty-eight, on January 5, 1996, and he had taken elaborate pains to insure that his death should not be marked by his friends or acquaintances with any kind of ceremony. His ashes were privately scattered in a pond at his country home in Connecticut. He was not sung out of the world by mourners. More than most people manage to do, he just disappeared.

WAS everything "due only" to Balanchine, as Kirstein claimed? The twentieth century has been an era of great artistic partnerships. During the heyday of analytic Cubism, Braque and Picasso so closely identified with each other that it is often difficult to say at a glance who painted what and when. Picasso expressed this intimate melding of their spirits by calling Braque—magisterially, sexily—"*Ma femme*." The Balanchine-Kirstein partnership was another instance of an inspired creative marriage. As in many such unions, an air of mystery surrounds the personal relations between the participants. After Balanchine's death, Kirstein claimed, "We were barely friends. . . . I hardly ever saw him except at the theatre. We hardly ever talked." To the hyper-articulate impresario, Balanchine seemed to dwell almost unknowably within a fortress of nonverbal creativity. "My chief impression of him," Kirstein once wrote, was of someone "never wholly discouraged, often depressed, absent as a tangible personality when not in actual labor onstage or in rehearsal."

But the fact remains that from the moment, in 1933, when Kirstein arranged for Balanchine to come to the United States their lives and fates were irreducibly blended. "My father taught me . . . that the duty, despair, and destiny of Jews was to survive and proceed," Kirstein wrote in "Thirty Years," his book about the City Ballet's history. "Why, or for what, he left for me to discover." The answer he eventually found to that question, his version of the vocational grail, was Balanchine. And Balanchine's dream, which he couldn't have realized without Kirstein, was to obtain the institutional space necessary to develop his gift to the utmost. "When Lincoln asked me [to come to America]," the choreographer said, "I already knew that it should be a school and a ballet company. I always wanted to have a start, with really clean, beautifully taught ballet people who could dance the way I want. And I told Lincoln, 'This is a great opportunity.' And I came here, and I expected that something would happen." The pair's subsequent faith in each other was strong enough so that through the course of four separate dance companies there was never a contract between them. "Confidence was mutual," Kirstein asserted, "confirmed by silence on irrelevant legalities."

PUBLIC RELATIONS

"We're interested in words, not deeds."

During their early years, he and Balanchine founded (in 1934) the School of American Ballet, the seedbed of future dancers for their companies; the American Ballet (1935); a touring company, Ballet Caravan (1937); and, after the hiatus of the war, a small, subscription-only troupe, Ballet Society (1946). In 1948, they were invited to join New York's City Center as the resident company, and to rename themselves the New York City Ballet. Then, in 1964, City Ballet moved to the brand-new Lincoln Center for the Performing Arts, and there, through the political and financial largesse of Kirstein's longtime patron Nelson Rockfeller, it was given a permanent home, in the State Theatre, which had been designed for the company by Kirstein's Harvard friend Philip Johnson.

To have created, within thirty years, the taste by which classical ballet was enjoyed by American audiences, and also, in the same period, to have set up a school to provide a supply of well-tuned bodies, and to have moved the dancers from a condition of nomadic vulnerability—performing in such venues as the Central High School of Needle Trades—into their own huge home at the very center of Manhattan constituted staggering cultural achievements, as Balanchine himself proudly explained: "This is important what we did, Lincoln and I. I taught everybody how to dance. It was like teaching people how to cook, how to grow the food, how to eat it. Our ballet didn't exist before."

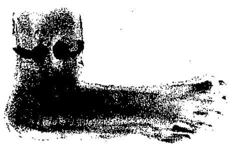
Balanchine, of course, formed the aesthetic and trained the dancers, but Kirstein was always a watchful, galvanizing (and often glowering) presence at rehearsals and performances. "I have been backstage and out front many nights and have developed a thermometric eye for what is being seen," he wrote. And his learnedness and his creativity were important to

Balanchine as a source of ideas. "Generally speaking," Kirstein said once, "he knew what he wanted, but for specifics he needed suggestions, so I could give them to him."

But—what was more important—Kirstein, as someone intent on artistically endowing a vision of perfection with tangible permanence, felt the necessity to produce a genealogy for and a conceptualization of Balanchine's work. (Arlene Croce, this magazine's dance critic, once called him "an artist who labored consciously and selflessly in behalf of other artists.") In a flood of books, program notes, and articles, he provided a clear but poetic definition of the Russian's genius. He wrote on one occasion, "Balanchine's ambition has ever been to make audiences see sound and hear dancing"—a verbal formula that is as succinct and complete as a line of algebra. And, of course, besides words, Balanchine's genius needed money—always more money—in order to realize itself onstage. Kirstein, with his own funds, commissioned music for Balanchine to work with (Stravinsky's great score for the ballet "Orpheus," for instance, cost him five thousand dollars in 1948), and he spent fathomless amounts of energy and time pleading with or cajoling others for their financial backing. "Money occupied somewhat more than half our waking hours," he wrote with a tinge of regretful asperity in 1973. It is fair to assume that without his having set such a heroic example few patrons would ever have ventured their own funds in support of Balanchine. Very visibly, Kirstein put his money where his heart was.

Beyond that, he had to carry on an endless struggle involving artistic and institutional diplomacy, intrigue, and proselytizing, and had to manipulate often inimical forces in the world of art and in society at large. Writing in 1980 about Saint-Gaudens's statue of Abraham Lincoln, he might have been offering a covert characterization of his own managerial strategies: "In it, we see the Lincolnian self, capable of delay, double talk, maneuver, hesitancy, compromise, in order that the one prime aim of his own era be effected." More straightforwardly, at another point he claimed, with ostentatious modesty, "I took care of the public aspects of it, the political aspects, the official aspects." Yet for him to "take care," on such a scale, of this essential, practical side of the dance, his most potent tool was a creative vision emanating from his ardent imagination. He reported once that his method had been "behaving as if something were true even if it wasn't, and using as a kind of target or magnet a notion that if you could imagine a situation as if it were true, as if we had a theatre, as if there were a ballet company."

A mutual friend, W. McNeil Lowry, asked Balanchine if he had ever doubted that he and Kirstein would one day have a great company and a great school of their own. After Balanchine's death, Lowry told Kirstein how the choreographer had answered the question: Balanchine "hadn't really doubted it, though he never knew, he said, what was happening to bring it about, because it always came from you."



As a directionless graduate student newly arrived from England, I was introduced to Kirstein by Edward Mendelson, W. H. Auden's literary executor. Mendelson thought that Kirstein might be able to help me with my doctorate on Auden, because he and the poet had been close friends for thirty-four years. (As it happened, after Lincoln's death I became his literary executor.) This optimistic scenario turned out not to be the case: Lincoln's stories about Auden were funny, and sometimes very touching, but they didn't really light up the poems for me. However, fate operates laterally: Lincoln's impetuous generosity and his memorable persona altered my life in ways that I could never have foreseen.

Entering Lincoln's house, as I first did one autumn evening in the late eighties, was like sliding through to the other side of the looking glass. It was not simply that this was a world of artistic and financial privilege, although it certainly was that. (Kirstein had given away or spent the vast bulk of the money that his mother and father left him—his father, Louis Kirstein, had been a partner in Filene's department store in Boston—yet by any standards he was still very well off.) It was also that the house had a mysteriously theatrical nature, and so did our encounter. I walked down a long, murky passageway, which, I could just see, was lined on each side by picture frames filled with images of writhing grotesques (Paul Cadmus's great cycle "The Seven Deadly Sins," now in the Metropolitan Museum). And looming in front of me, at the other end of this dark corridor, was an enormous figure—frowning and attentive—clad in a white polo shirt and black pants, his arms crossed over his chest. The intensity of his personality, the glare of his glare, as it radiated down the passage toward me, made him seem even larger in my eyes. As Kirstein himself once wrote, in a memoir, of the Asiatic mage George Gurdjieff's gaze (Gurdjieff was someone who had scared him when he was young), "His was the combined operation of X-ray and laserbeam, with the smack of a sledgehammer."

Finally, I entered the room where Kirstein was standing. On a table was a kaleidoscopic mishmash of little pictures, tiny statues, coins, icons, and other objets d'art. I noticed with a start a lump of flawless crystal carved into the shape of a snake coiling itself in and out of a perfectly translucent human skull. On the whitewashed brick walls hung portraits of Kirstein by friends of his, including a weird tripartite image, by the Russian émigré Pavel Tchelitchew, of Kirstein as, simultaneously, a sexy nude boxer, an earnest newspaper reader, and a stern, red-eyed baseball coach. In addition, there were several dreamy Piero-like pictures, by Jared French, of the idyllic, ambisexual life on Fire Island in the nineteen-forties, where Kirstein then spent as much of his summers as he could spare. (Lincoln once showed Andy Warhol his pictures, and Warhol wrote approvingly of them in his diary: "Good paintings. . . . Realists who'd done paintings of muscle boys.") And also on the room's walls hung rows of snarling, grinning, grimacing African masks. In the middle of this strange space, towering over everything, was a many-times-life-size marble bust of Abraham Lincoln, the man after whom both Kirstein and the arts center where his ballet company now dances were named. The bust rested on a huge wooden plinth, perhaps five feet high. The President's Adam's apple was the size of an enormous fist. It was my first glimpse of the surreally meaningful juxtapositions that sprouted up around Kirstein wherever he went: I was inside an art work made out of art works.

Without even saying "Hello," Kirstein barked "Read this out," and he brusquely—and, I now think, shyly—thrust a piece of paper in my hand. I can't remember what "this" was—some limp piece of humor Xeroxed from an English magazine. I made my way through the lines as well as I could, and at the end of my little audition Kirstein chuckled and gave me a playful dig in the ribs. I saw that on a gleaming table holding a lamp there was also a black-and-white cameo picture of George Balanchine, a wistful, distant presence looking troubled, and next to him another image, this one of the Queen of England in a lemon-colored dress, smiling brightly and petting a corgi.

AFTER our odd first meeting, Kirstein and I soon found that we got along. What was he looking for in me? An undemanding, educated young acquaintance—like several others he'd already acquired—to help him through the boredom of old age, I suppose. I made him laugh, and I was also a good, servile listener. And what was I looking for in him? Someone to jolt me into purposeful action; someone who could knock through the wall of my complacency.

Within six months, he had given me a key to his house, so that I could come and go as I wanted. (I subsequently found that I was one of a brood of people who were privately protected and helped by this culture hero. A restorer, who was an old friend, and a little-known realist painter both had small workrooms at the top of the house.) Then, because I artlessly informed Lincoln one day that I had nowhere to write in the tiny apartment that my wife and I shared in the East Village, he instantly arranged to have a minuscule storeroom in his house's basement wired for illumination and to have a power source put in there for my computer.

When you were with Lincoln as he moved around his converted carriage house, he seemed to do so effortlessly and gracefully, as if he were flitting or hovering rather than walking. His peregrinations were almost completely silent. Oddly, though, when I began to work in my bulb-lit cell in the basement I found out that I could always hear him moving heavily about upstairs. The house's ancient floorboards regularly groaned over my head, as if a bookcase were creeping slowly down the hall.

The house had been bought for Kirstein and his wife, Fidelma, by his doting mother, Rose Kirstein, shortly before she died, in 1952. The Japanese-film expert Donald Richie, who had been one of Kirstein's friends in the fifties and sixties, told me judiciously that Lincoln "loved small, enclosed worlds, and he himself contrived quite a few, including the Gramercy Park house." The sense of surprising passages and enclaves, of unseen recesses and mini-warrens of small rooms, permeated the interior of the building. There were pictures on almost every wall, but many were permanently invisible unless their owner chose to flick on a light and show them to you. Sometimes when I was there, he would pad off partway through our conversation and return a little while later from the shadowy interior with a book or a photograph that he had picked out of a cupboard somewhere: a glistening, pristine edition of Ezra Pound's "Cantos" from the late twenties, or a mint copy of Henry James's "A Small Boy and Others" from 1913.

The back of the house was airy and bright. The rooms were crammed in Victorian fashion, but the effect was somehow elegant and minimalist. And a lesson or a surprise—like that Diaghilev card—could be anywhere. Once, Kirstein stooped down toward a bookshelf. I thought he was going to show me an enormous coffee-table volume of early Italian frescoes, which he'd dumped, painfully, in my lap once before. But instead he hooked out a tasselled crimson photograph album full of black-and-white shots, carefully mounted, and apparently taken in the late fifties, of Japanese friends, some of them wearing neat postmen's or policemen's uniforms, and also what looked like shots of exactly the same people, except that this time they were naked, in steaming outdoor pools or in small, bare wooden rooms.

LINCOLN was so huge that wherever he went he seemed, in Christopher Isherwood's beautiful phrase, "like Gulliver among the Lilliputians." (One passport has him listed at six feet two and a half inches, but I think that is a pitiful underestimate.) Lincoln simply towered over most people. He is "so big," Isherwood wrote in his diary after meeting him in 1939, "that he has the air of protecting everybody, of holding up the world." Isherwood was also, I think, getting at Lincoln's actual strength. In earlier years, Kirstein could shove people

THE WORLD

Running home
in the dark
barefoot

From a wedding
party at the big house
his daughter nine years old

Met up with someone's
half-rooted
property stake

The winged flange
swiped at her
ankle

A crescent
wound bleeding
when she walked

In to them smiling she
had not
noticed it yet.

—STEPHEN SANDY

around if he wanted to. (He once got into a brief fistfight with the painter Lucian Freud in the bar of the Covent Garden Opera House.) And Donald Richie seized on Kirstein's Gulliver-like scale when he described him in his brilliant (and as yet unpublished) "Japan Journals." When Lincoln was visiting Japan in the late nineteen-fifties, Richie wrote of him:

> He is here in Japan even more gentle, as though his big hands might poke holes in the shoji, as though his large feet might stomp holes in the tatami. Tall, he apologetically curls under lintels. Heavy, he tries out floors with a smile of trepidation. His is the gentleness of very strong people, those who do not need to exhibit their strength. His clumsiness is also that of the big—particularly here in the land of the nominally small.

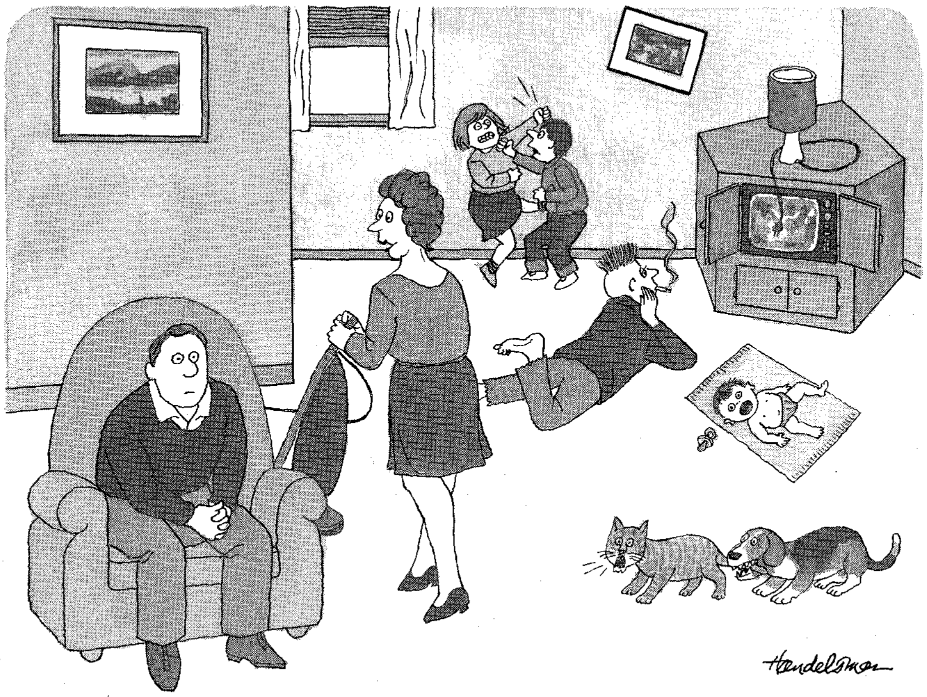
Lincoln could use his strength and power to be protective, but Isherwood also saw that he could be terrifying: "In his blue pea jacket, he looks like a mad clipper captain out of Melville. His hair is cropped like a convict's, and his eyes, behind austere tin spectacles, seem to be examining you through a microscope." There was a shy Bartleby side to Kirstein, but there was this Ahab side as well. The domineering intellectual force of his personality and the verbal intensity with which he projected his ideas were such that people who knew both him and Balanchine have told me they believe that the choreographer sometimes had to find ways to shelter himself from Lincoln's overwhelming, unremitting energy. For my part, I remember having an apparently innocuous conversation with him and then walking placidly home to bed. But, as if in involuntary testimony to his disturbing depths, I had noisy, blood-drenched dreams all night long.

LINCOLN and I spent a lot of time together during the final decade or so of his long, stressful, multifaceted life. During that period, we had many breakfasts and lunches at his house or at various Irish pubs, Polish restaurants, and New Age eateries along lower Third Avenue. He liked hearty, indigestible food and claimed to regard eating (and drinking) as nothing more elevated than the taking on of "fuel." (Some of those meals we had were utterly silent. Others were voluble and hilarious.) Eventually, I also helped him revise and edit some of his last books, and as I whiled my way through my late twenties and early thirties I must have spent a couple of hundred afternoons listening (and occasionally asking questions) as he lounged fully clothed and electrically alert on his bed, surrounded by his expensive pictures and books and by the huge, juicy green ficus plants he liked to grow.

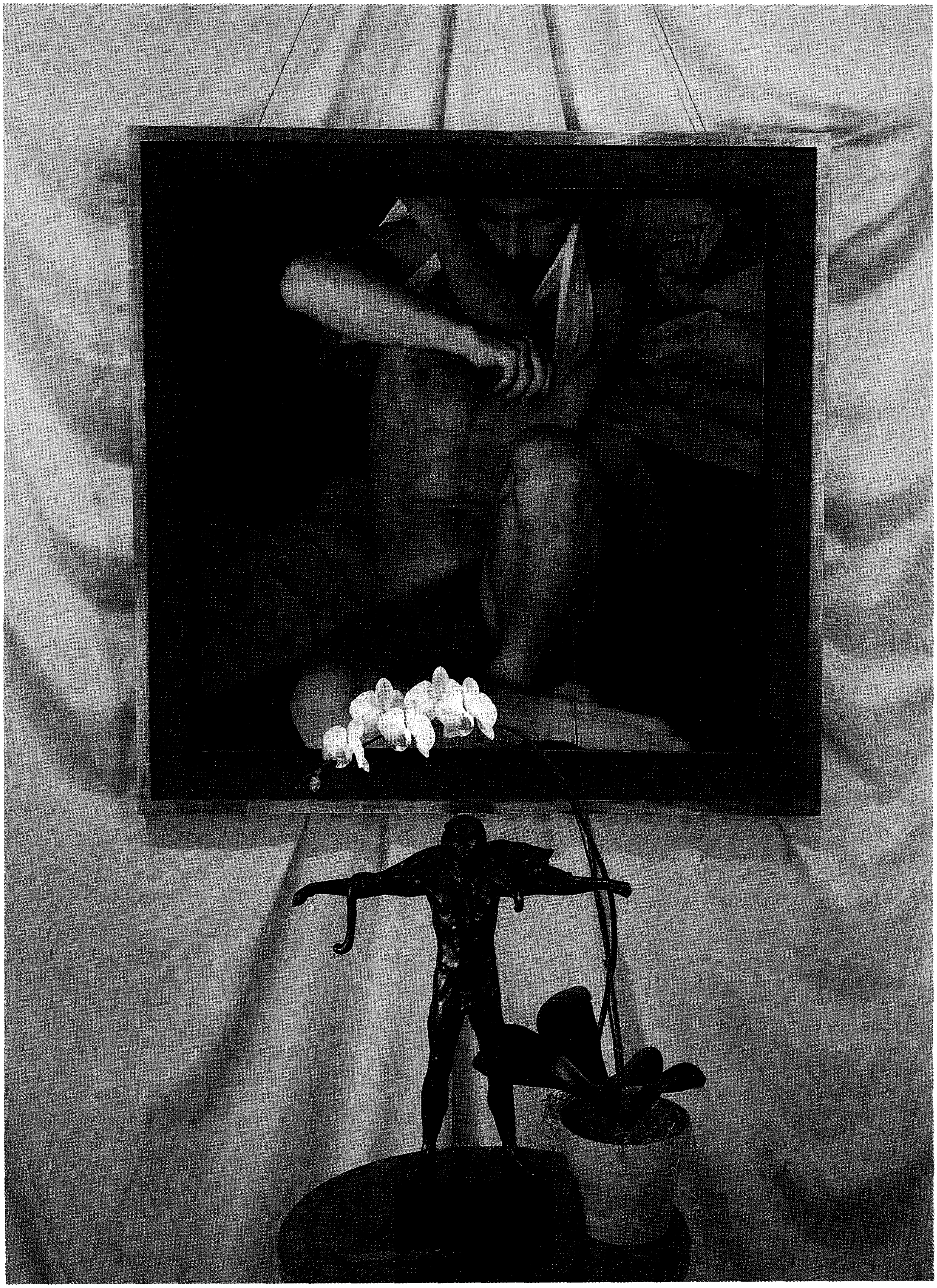
He was a spectacular conversationalist. Like the crystalline sentences in his writing, his spoken comments were wonderfully purified and concise. For instance, I once brought up the subject of the persistent attacks on the Peter Martins era at City Ballet made by writers who complained that Martins lacked Balanchine's greatness as a choreographer. Lincoln swivelled his head around, looked directly into my eyes, and said simply, "They want to be young again."

And he was always full of relaxed candor in his reminiscences. I remember him explaining to me how Muriel Draper, a *saloneuse* and "older woman" with whom he had a long affair in the thirties, would keep him in a state of sickening erotic heat (he clapped his left palm vigorously into the crook of his right forearm) by recounting to him what she had done the night before with her other boyfriend. And I recall him telling me puckishly how, after the Ford Foundation awarded the School of American Ballet a huge grant in 1963, Martha Graham called him at home at midnight and told him, before slamming down the phone, that he was "nothing but a common thief" and she would never speak to him again. Looking back on everything, he often seemed in a very benign mood about his achievements and battles. "They want me to feel bitter," he once murmured mysteriously, staring off into space. And then he gave a faint, half-private smile, and said, "But I don't!"

"A SELF is a treacherous structure," Kirstein once wrote. "Never to be defined as a single unity, but braided of diverse strains responding to crises which alter, torment, or strengthen the forged centrality." Certainly his own self was multiple, not single. It's hard for me to reconcile the two or more Kirsteins that I came to know during the period of our acquaintance. On the one hand, there was the ballet scholar eloquently expressing the primal attraction that dance had for him. Arlene Croce declared, "His writings on dance—history books, reviews, monographs, polemical pamphlets—are as important a body of work as any critic in any art has produced." One typical Kirstein passage speaks of a "heroic dimension, far larger than life" in ballet, and goes on, "Everything was intensified through the physicality of the dancing itself, through the power, athletics, and lyricism of ballet's language. This was where I wanted to live. This was what I wanted to do." On the other hand, there was the Lincoln Kirstein who seemed to exist at a deliberate remove from the bustle and backbiting of the dance world. This Kirstein, eternally



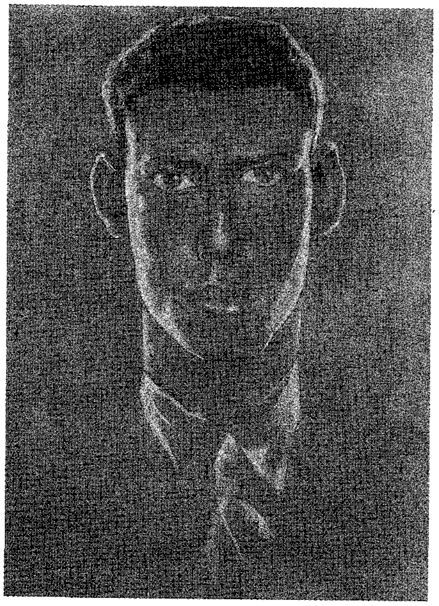
"I bet you're glad you got out of politics to spend more time with your family."

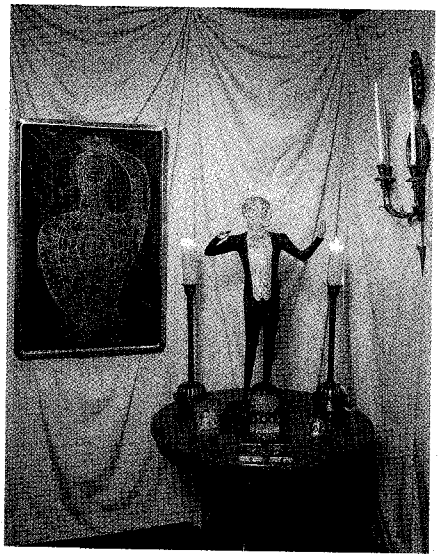


An interior photograph of the house. Many of the paintings were invisible unless Kirstein chose to flick on a light.

unpredictable and youthfully inquisitive, was the person who loved poetry and architecture, fantasized about British country houses and Japanese temples, loved to hear bad language, pored over children's books about dinosaurs and astrophysics, planted shrubs, and doted on his cats. And this was also the person who faithfully, every week, visited the nursing home in the country where his wife, Fidelma, frail in old age, spent her final years. (She died in 1991.)

Although Kirstein found romance predominantly with men, his marriage to Fidelma Cadmus, the sister of Paul Cadmus, in 1941, had not been any sort of mistake or pragmatic bow to convention. Lincoln's love and admiration for Paul Cadmus, whose work he wrote about often, must have been bound up with his love for Fidelma. But I don't think the binary of "straight" and "gay" interested Kirstein much, at least when I knew him. (Over the years, he must have seen far too many erotic reversals and zigzags to be impressed by the idea of an essential sexual identity.) Lincoln loved Fidelma, and he greatly valued her artistic gifts. She was a highly lyrical painter, and among her best works are a strikingly sensual egg-tempera portrait of herself, her hair gathered up into a sparkling white conch of a beach towel, and one of her shaven-headed husband, looking softer, more puzzled and vulnerable. Paul and Fidelma's mother came from Spain, and Fidelma had an exotic, Iberian beauty. In her role as a hostess, she provided Kirstein and Balanchine's ballet company with a glamour that was socially important during its formative years, after the Second World War. When Kirstein was forty-two, he wrote to Buckle, shortly before the two balletomanes met, "God has at a crucial point in my life sent me an angel, whom I married ten years ago and with whom I have always been much too happy for my deserts; you can ask Fred [Ashton] about my wife; she is far nicer than me."





A modernist opposed to modernism: a self-portrait; Kirstein and his wife; and one of the house's enclosed worlds.

(OPPOSITE) JERRY L. THOMPSON; (THIS PAGE) LINCOLN KIRSTEN; CECIL BEATON/SOTHEBY'S LONDON; JERRY L. THOMPSON

KIRSTEIN was fond of saying that 1907, the year he was born, in Rochester, New York, was "the hundred-and-seventh year of the nineteenth century." His life began, and almost ended immediately, with a disastrous exposure to the vagaries of late-Victorian medicine. When he was only a few days old, the sweat glands on either side of his groin became infected, and he developed septicemia. The glands were cut out, but Lincoln came close to dying. Afterward, his mother acquired a terror of any signs of illness in her son. The phobia had predictable results. "Was I becoming a 'sissy,' like my unfortunate cousin Nat?" Kirstein, a person later famous in the New York art world for his explosively confrontational manner, wondered when he was a child. "Castration nightmares precipitated me into self-testings. . . . Fear of more surgery was at the root of it all; my mother's fathomless apprehension determined more of my character than was necessary." All his life, he loathed any proximity to illness, even the illness of close friends.

Throughout his childhood, first in Rochester and then, from 1911 on, in Boston, the mid-Victorian world was present for him in a profound and vital way. The child of rich Jewish parents, he went to stuffy, Old World-style prep schools, including Phillips Exeter and the Berkshire School. In many ways, Kirstein's twentieth-century avant-gardist tastes were formed—like modernism itself—from nineteenth-century sources. Both his parents provided him with a link to high-Victorian domestic style. His father, born in 1866, was, according to Lincoln, "old enough to have been my grandfather." (He was forty-one when Lincoln, the second of three children, was born.) Mr. Kirstein loved hand tailoring, massive cigars, and well-made, well-maintained, physically impressive objects. And Lincoln recalled absorbing from his father, who served for years as president of the Boston Public Library, nineteenth-century "mythology, legends and adventure stories as current events." The heroism and horror of the Civil War (emotionally enhanced by the direct connection, via his first name, to the man at the very center of the conflict) were as immediate to Kirstein as the bloodbaths of the Trojan War would have been to an Athenian in the eleventh century B.C.

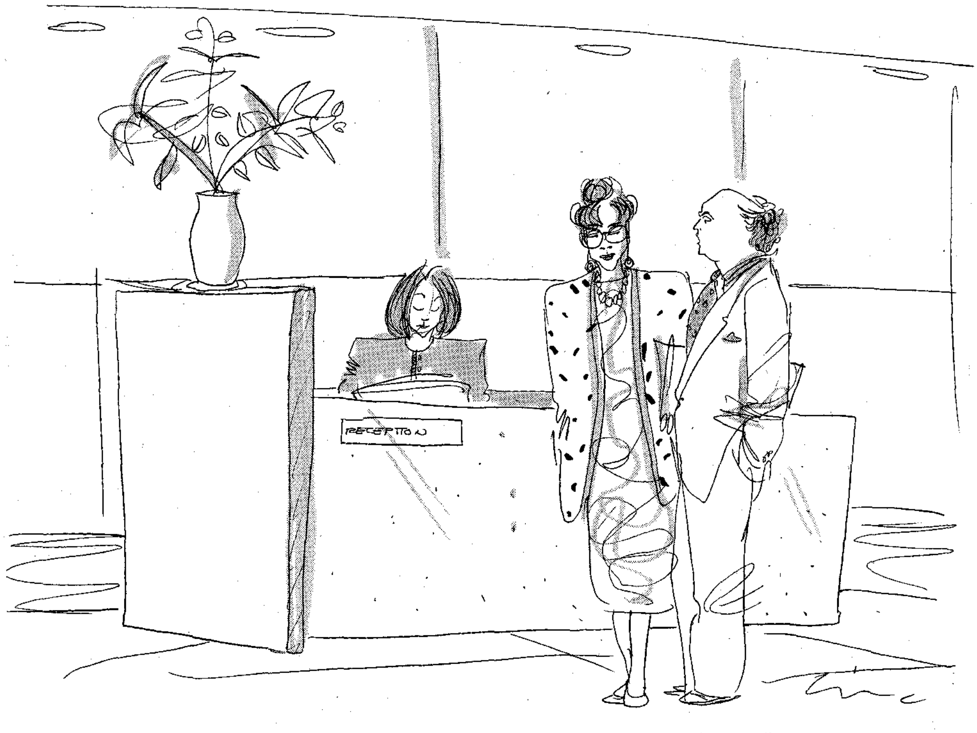
Lincoln's mother was younger than her husband, but her tastes, like his, were emphatically rooted in the past. She adored expensive lace and embroidery, and she worshipped the works of Richard Wagner. In 1924, she took her artistically inclined son on a pilgrimage to Bayreuth, where nineteenth-century sets were still being deployed. "Every leaf and twig was crisply netted," her son recalled fondly. "The dragon Fafner spouted real steam; the three Rhine maidens, supported on miniature pulpits on wheels, swam convincingly."

When Kirstein was at Harvard, from 1926 to 1930, he seemed to find himself immersed in the past but at the same time confronted by the present. On the one hand, he was seeking out the aromatic cultural shades and traces of Melville, Hawthorne, and the Transcendentalists, which seemed to him to be everywhere around him in Massachusetts. On the other hand, he was in privileged alignment with the living, breathing spirit of modernism, with its strenuousness, its depersonalized exoticism, its intense cultural demands, its autarkic fervor. He contributed immensely to the links between the university and the formation of American modernism: he founded and edited *Hound & Horn*, one of the era's legendary periodicals, which published work by Pound, Wallace Stevens, Gertrude Stein, and Marianne Moore. (Lincoln himself later described it as "a passport to the big world.") He also set up and ran the Harvard Society for Contemporary Art, a forerunner of the Museum of Modern Art in New York. It was he and his Harvard friend Edward M. M. Warburg who were responsible in the late twenties for putting on some of the first public exhibitions of modernist painting, including works by Picasso and de Chirico, in the United States.

A fascination with the past was generating its own antithesis, a zeal for the new. In Balanchine Kirstein would come to champion an artist who was paring down the referential and narrative elements in his medium toward a zero-point of abstraction. "Most of our choreography was insistently contrapuntal," Kirstein once wrote, "phrasing deliberate imbalance, syncopation, and calculated offbeats." As a result, he explained, perhaps with the faintest trace of moroseness at the loss of the decorativeness his mother had taught him to love, "spectacle, dominated by a painter's imagination, no matter how appropriate or inventive its dancing, would always remain for us, with few exceptions, beyond need or possibility. . . . Balanchine's principal adjunct, apart from the dancers themselves, would be music."

Kirstein's fidelity to the past never disappeared. His sense of possibility was Romantic, and he scripted his life along the lines of the heroic adventurism of nineteenth-century novelists like Balzac, Stevenson, and Dickens, whose works he and his father had imbibed together. "At the moment when joining oneself to modernism (African art, Picasso, Joyce, Stravinsky) was obligatory, my private exemplars were shelved in a secret library," Kirstein once wrote as he reflected on his early frame of mind. "I mirrored myself as Balzac's Lucien de Rubempré, Bulwer-Lytton's Pelham, most definitely Disraeli's Coningsby." While that might sound merely fanciful in the mouths of some, Kirstein's account of his life makes sense. Disregarding any idea of limits (chronological, material, financial), he did actually follow the trajectory of a young outsider attacking and mastering the highest cultural redoubts of what would become for a while the world's capital city.

Around 1932, Kirstein moved permanently to Manhattan. "I wanted to repudiate Harvard, I wanted to repudiate Boston," he explained. "I wanted to make myself a New Yorker, or much more a sort of cosmopolitan." His first historic gestures toward cosmopolitanizing not only himself but his country came a year or so later, when, after a series of meetings in Paris and London, he persuaded Balanchine to come to America. The choreographer, then suffering from tuberculosis, was exhausted by the intrigues raging among the post-Diaghilev companies and was entranced by the prospect of a new start in the land of Ginger Rogers and jazz. In Europe in 1933, Kirstein listened, his "attention genuinely rapt," as Balanchine described his dreams of a new avant-garde dance aesthetic. In his turn, Kirstein produced a large map of the United States and spread it out, like a magic carpet, on the floor of his hotel room in London so that Balanchine could see the distance between Hartford, where their first temporary base in the country was to be, and "New York City and beyond." Years later, Kirstein described the scene: "Everything lay in a spectacular future, the tactile presence of the big



"If at first you don't succeed, subcontract it out."

map on the clear, fresh floor exuded an aura of comforting promise.” Over the next six years, the pair created a string of avant-garde dance institutions. During those years, Kirstein also found time to finish his classic history of ballet, “Dance,” in 1935; to become head of the W.P.A. Federal Dance Theatre program, in 1936; and—his writing on photography is perhaps second in importance only to his writing on ballet—to produce the first major text on Walker Evans’s pictures, for an exhibition held at the Museum of Modern Art in 1938.

But, even as his involvement with the modern arts deepened, Kirstein began to attack modern art and dance from a conservative, “reactionary” vantage point. His memoirs imply that he harbored doubts about modernist painting early. “I was very much interested in so-called modern art in the twenties,” he claimed, “but my instruction in art history made me suspicious of most of it.” After the Second World War, he took a very public turn against most twentieth-century painting, a view represented controversially in a piece that he wrote for *Harper’s* in 1948, “The State of Modern Painting.” The rhetoric is fervid, but he later stated his position more placidly and more generally to Lloyd Goodrich, of the Whitney Museum: “My attitude is merely against the idea of improvisation, decoration, fragmentation, and stylization.” It was a principled, lonely, Canute-like antagonism, which he maintained for the rest of his life—that is, for almost half a century.

He also became known in the late nineteen-thirties for fierce, iconoclastic salvos against the modern-dance movement, codified in a series of burningly pugnacious pamphlets. In 1939, when he was helping found a journal, *Films*, dedicated to the proposition that film was an art on an equal footing with all the older mediums, he assaulted, in broadsides such as “Ballet Alphabet” and “Blast at Ballet,” the claims of modern dance to be considered an art at all. In the 1937 “Blast at Ballet,” for instance, he wrote:

“I’m calling it ‘Genesis.’ It’s part of a five-book contract.”

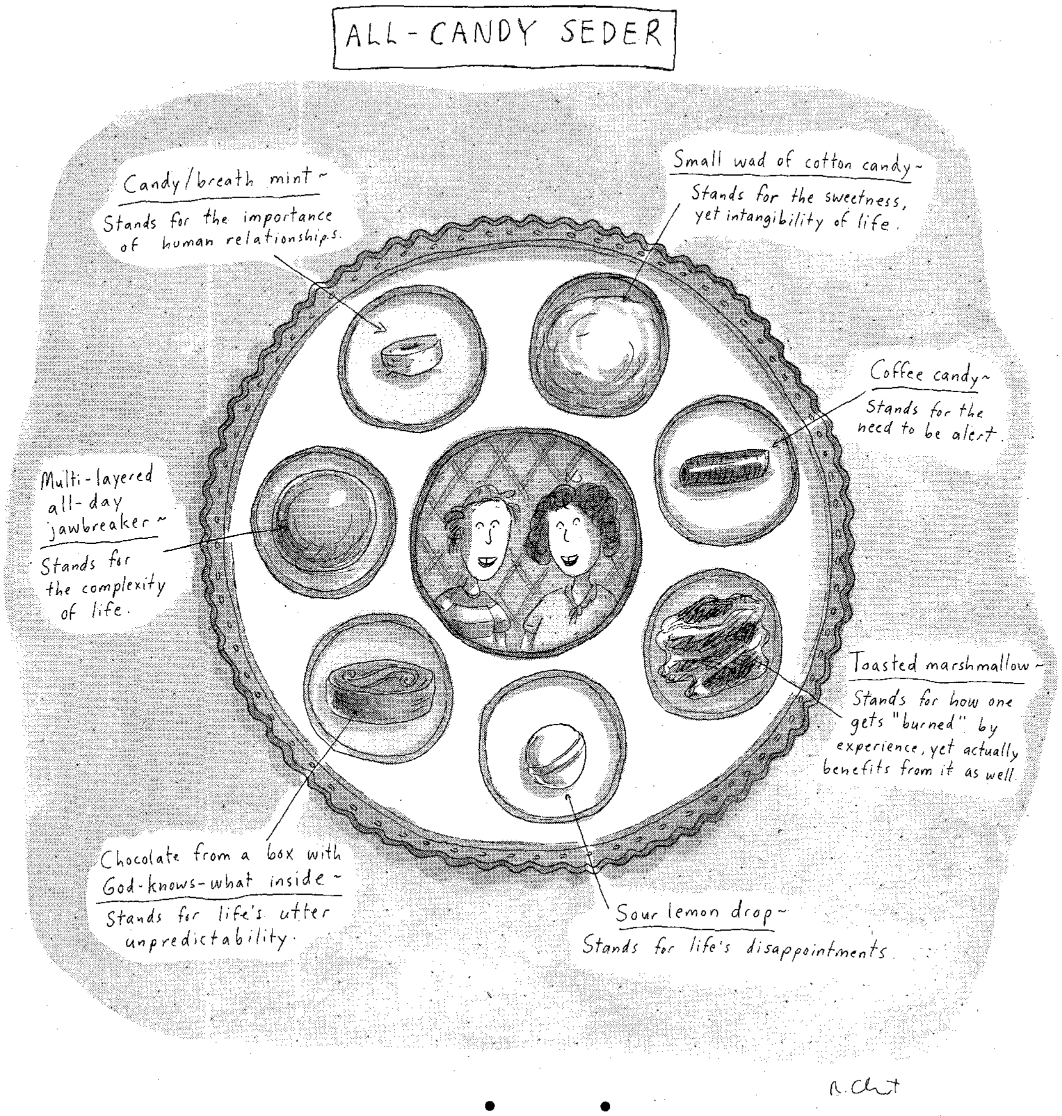
• •

> I have long been suspect as an enemy of the “modern” or “concert” dance, and . . . still vigorously am. I have always found to hate in most of it a persistent, arbitrary, priggish and doctrinaire avoidance of theatrical elements. . . . I have been irritated by its prejudiced rejection of the form of ballet as a decadent hangover of feudalism. I have been contemptuous of its general intellectualization and clannishness, divorced from the physical needs of our modern stage.

Combativeness against the modern is itself a hallmark of modernist style. Kirstein was formed in an artistic world in which extremity of expression was a virtual prerequisite of artistic seriousness: T. S. Eliot asserting that “a spirit of excessive tolerance is to be deprecated”; W. H. Auden exhorting readers to take part in “the struggle”; Pound savagely declaring civilization to be “an old bitch gone in the teeth.” Kirstein’s was a modernism of impersonality and anti-subjectivism—of a stringent, anti-humanist “rage for order” that looked anomalous in the second half of the century only because he had lived on into another, more laid-back era. He was a living link to the confrontational, fundamentalist ethos of early modernism. Like Eliot and D. H. Lawrence, Kirstein was that most paradoxical of figures: a modernist opposed to modernism and modernity. And yet, for all his hostility to the self-consciously modern, whether in dance or in painting, there was always a progressive, experimental side to his thinking. I once arrived at his house to find him lying flat out on his bed, like a teen-ager with a comic, studying—with ferocious attentiveness—a page of one of modernism’s outer-limit texts, James Joyce’s “Finnegans Wake.”

“My father often warned me against becoming ‘swell-headed’ simply from impulses of energetic or nervous curiosity,” Kirstein wrote innocuously in “Thirty Years.” But he meant “swell-headedness” almost literally, as if the swollen mind, pressured too much, might explode. Richard Buckle met Kirstein in London in 1950, just before the first performance of Balanchine’s “Ballet Imperial” at Covent Garden, and he wrote about how intense, even excessive Kirstein’s energy could seem. “He described to me the wonders of Balanchine’s ‘Orpheus,’ the words pouring in an elemental torrent from his lips, as if life were too short to waste any time before inspiring me with his ideals and enlisting me in the cause,” Buckle said. He alluded to what was happening at the moment, which may have triggered in Kirstein an emphatic “state of nervous tension that summer,” as the young impresario lurched toward a breakdown:

> He had spent his money, he had founded a school, he had created a company for the world’s greatest choreographer, he had dressed them, lit them and publicized them, he had brought them to London’s most illustrious theatre, he had written the programmes, invited the guests of


ALL-CANDY SEDER
Candy/breath mint ~ Stands for the importance of human relationships.
Small wad of cotton candy ~ Stands for the sweetness, yet intangibility of life.
Coffee candy ~ Stands for the need to be alert.
Multi-layered all-day jawbreaker ~ Stands for the complexity of life.
Toasted marshmallow ~ Stands for how one gets "burned" by experience, yet actually benefits from it as well.
Chocolate from a box with God-knows-what inside ~ Stands for life's utter unpredictability.
Sour lemon drop ~ Stands for life's disappointments.
R. Chast

honour, and tried to make the critics see sense. What was there left for him to do?

• •

HYMNS against the horror of unleashed egotism appear everywhere in the pages of Kirstein's anti-personal aesthetic, in his contempt for "insistence of personalism, expressionism, idiosyncrasy against the service of the de-selfed Self." The flight from "Self" is an intellectual principle, but it must also sometimes reflect an element of deep self-recoil. Kirstein often traced the origins of his classicist aesthetic attitudes to Eliot's famous essay "Tradition and the Individual Talent," which he first read while he was in college. (He wrote later that this short, epigrammatic paper became his life's "breviary.") In the light of what is now known about Eliot's life, this manifesto seems like a highly self-revelatory piece of writing. In it the poet declares that poetry, and by extension all art, "is not the expression of personality, but an escape from personality. But, of course, only those who have personality and emotions know what it means to want to escape from these things." And, just as the essay lights up its author's anxieties, it illuminates the fractured sensibilities of its admirers.

There are many people around New York who feel scarred by Kirstein, even now. Many who thought they were close friends of his found themselves summarily dropped. "I have an extraordinary talent for intimacy and unequalled animal energy, which seduces people into thinking that we are friends or even lovers," he wrote to Buckle in 1950, "but I take no responsibility for it, and often people are wounded and betrayed when I turn around and never recall them; this is not being horrid—it's being busy." Donald Richie wittily comments that Kirstein's aim-directed ruthlessness was so great that sometimes he could wipe entire countries from his mental map, once they had failed to measure up to his enormous expectations: "He dropped Japan before Japan was ready to drop him." I'm quite certain that I wouldn't have survived very long in the orbit of the Kirstein of, say, 1963, when he was busy dropping Japan. I was able to stay close as long as I did because, as an old man, he was burning out, growing cooler. But he still threw people out of his house. He still got up from a dinner table if someone was boring him. He wrote scaldingly candid letters to people who asked him for his opinion of their efforts. And, as anyone managing an organization must, he dealt daily with the rigors of saying no and of disappointing and infuriating petitioners. All this was an inevitable price of building up what he did. But there was more.

"Bipolar disorder" is the clinical term for manic-depression, and Lincoln suffered from the illness on and off during his later life. He was several times confined to institutions during his highs, and in the fifties he was treated at least once with electroshock therapy. When healthy, he was ashamed of his manic behavior, which could be frightening to others. Betty Cage, the City Ballet's former manager, remembers some days when he would arrive, very agitated, to spend the night on the couch in her brownstone, near Lincoln Center—times when he just wanted to be near someone he knew well. On one of these occasions, when she came downstairs the next morning Lincoln had vanished, but he had left the place utterly changed. During the waste hours of the early morning, under the compulsion of who knows what agony of spirit, he had taken all the knives out of her kitchen drawers and laid them out neatly, like fresh surgical instruments, on the work surfaces, some arranged as crosses.

Kirstein himself considered suffering of this kind almost an occupational disease of the theatre. "Hysteria is concomitant with the arts of performance," he once wrote. "Without it—since after all, it is mainly a sign of high spirits or excess energy—nothing of much intensity can be achieved on stage." He saw dance as an intricate dialectic: the highest—the most energized—meeting point of order and disorder. I remember him commenting on this indirectly when he recalled, grinning, that Balanchine never minded if a dancer fell over onstage. Although it spoiled the image of perfection for a moment, it was like a glimpse behind the curtain: it showed the audience the precariousness of the effort involved.

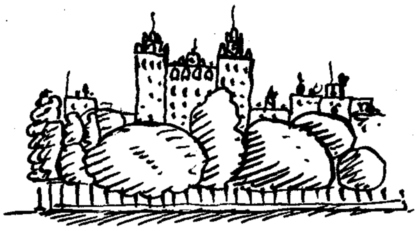
For Kirstein, the chaos and anguish of life could be mastered in ballet by design, discipline, human ingenuity, and training, and the body could be redeemed from its earthbound clumsiness. And yet without the disorderly energies attendant on extremity and a reckless perfection, without the dangerous push into abnormal reaches of experience, the performance would mean nothing. A kind of modern, subjective fever had to energize the ballet's classical idiom—just as it energizes Kirstein's own writing.

He spoke many times, and not altogether ironically, of his lifelong involvement with dance as a kind of latent sickness. "My first contact with stage dancing introduced me to a preoccupation, commitment, or addiction," he wrote once. "Cocteau named it the 'red-and-gold disease.' The malady, obsession, advanced state of unease, indeed disease, was compounded of passion for the preposterous, the tease of perfection which was an impersonation of grandeur, or in exalted cases, the superhuman and the heroic."

It may have been some sense of his separateness from the ideas that other people had of him which made Lincoln, the impresario, so tickled about having been a private in the United States Army during the Second World War—one semi-anonymous face among thousands of semi-anonymous faces that flooded into Europe after America joined the fight against Germany and Japan, in 1941. He later recognized it as a piece of amazing luck that he hadn't become—like almost everyone else in his Harvard class in the armed forces—an officer. "I would have been bored to screaming sobs by forced cogeniality with people of no interest at all—most of whom are kind and good," he wrote to his sister at the time. Instead, he gladly found himself in the sexy and exotic (for him) world of the enlisted soldier.

This anomaly in rank occurred because of Kirstein's involvement in prewar American political intrigues. He had known Nelson Rockefeller since the early thirties. (He had been recruited in 1932 to pose as "the typical American Jew" for Diego Rivera's murals in Rockefeller Center, which were later destroyed.) In 1940, Rockefeller became Coördinator for Inter-American Affairs in the second Roosevelt Administration. As part of his battle for control over American policy in South America, Rockefeller was exporting many different varieties of American cultural expression to South America. He twice asked Kirstein to visit the region with money to buy paintings for the Museum of Modern Art, an institution that was then financed largely with Rockefeller family money. (Many of the pictures that Kirstein bought on these journeys are now in the museum's permanent collection.) Around the same time, Ballet Caravan, Kirstein and Balanchine's company, also visited the continent.

In addition to purchasing art and facilitating cultural interchange, Kirstein was, he told me, to report back in secret to Rockefeller on the dubious political sympathies of the American Embassies he visited. Soon, however, his letters to his powerful and rich patron in the government were intercepted by the State Department. Kirstein was in Brazil, where he was observing what he felt to be Axis-fond behavior by the American Ambassador, Jefferson Caffery. After the interception of the letters, Caffery arranged for the young aesthete to get a scare. Acting on the orders of the American vice-consul, the Brazilian police arrested Kirstein and threw him in jail in São Paulo, where he languished for a few days until Rockefeller was able to arrange for his release. (Perhaps partly as a result of this escapade, Lincoln became strongly unillusioned about the way the United States was run. He once told me he believed that big things were possible in America precisely because the corruption, the illegality, and the bending of rules are so pervasive here.)



Consequently, Kirstein entered the Army in 1943 as a private first class under an administrative black cloud conjured up for him by the State Department. I remember him telling me, against all the evidence, "I never did anything until the war." But it was the war that provided him with the material for one of his most distinctive literary achievements, the poems in his book "Rhymes of a Pfc." Many of the first drafts were written in Europe, on a small, portable wooden desk that Lincoln made for himself in France. Unlike, say, Wilfred Owen's front-line poems, written during the First World War, Kirstein's are mainly about Army life backstage. They are about driving and drilling and mopping up, rounding up and rescuing—the kind of organizational grunt work that he often oversaw in the theatre. They are also bizarre depictions of wartime antiheroics. In Kirstein's Army, troops on the same side attack each other instead of the enemy; sleeping civilians are shot accidentally by drunken soldiers; famous generals weep in the lavatory; and troops begin jerking off frenetically to comfort themselves as the shells start to fall around them. Hysterically disordered at times, his Army was at other times a place of magical excitement and intimacy. It was a kind of bohemia, in fact, where almost anything was permitted and possible, where privates preferred to sleep with each other, and not, as macho military legend would insist, with the local girls.

So nothing pleased Lincoln more than the assembled props of the Good Life which he saw crammed in the back of Auden's Jeep when the two of them met up in Germany in 1945. He found that Auden had stacked there:

> Pot, kettle, mattress, a fat case of books,
> Floor-lamps, victrola, Wagner's profile
> plaque,
> Discs; a crate of wine, God knows all
> what.

Here, momentarily, was a perfect home away from home, a spot of calm and comfort, a "stay against confusion," of the sort that Lincoln always treasured.

But of course the Army also exposed Kirstein to evil and horror and disorder on a scale that he hadn't known before. He wrote to his brother-in-law, Paul Cadmus, from the ruins of a bombed German city, "In all your life you've never seen anything like it. The desolation is frozen as if the moment of combustion was suddenly arrested, and the air had lost its power to hold atoms together and various centers of gravity had a dogfight for matter, and matter lost." And it was also the war, with its constant drawing and redrawing of the map of Europe, that persuaded him that really anything was possible, if he could make himself believe it to be inevitable. "The Army," he once said rather melodramatically, "gave me a taste for exercises of simulacra of free will. I gained an illusion that I might do much as I wished so long as I knew what it was and analyzed the factors. A former weakness for the tentative, accidental, or improvisatory was sloughed off, and with it, much insecurity and doubt."

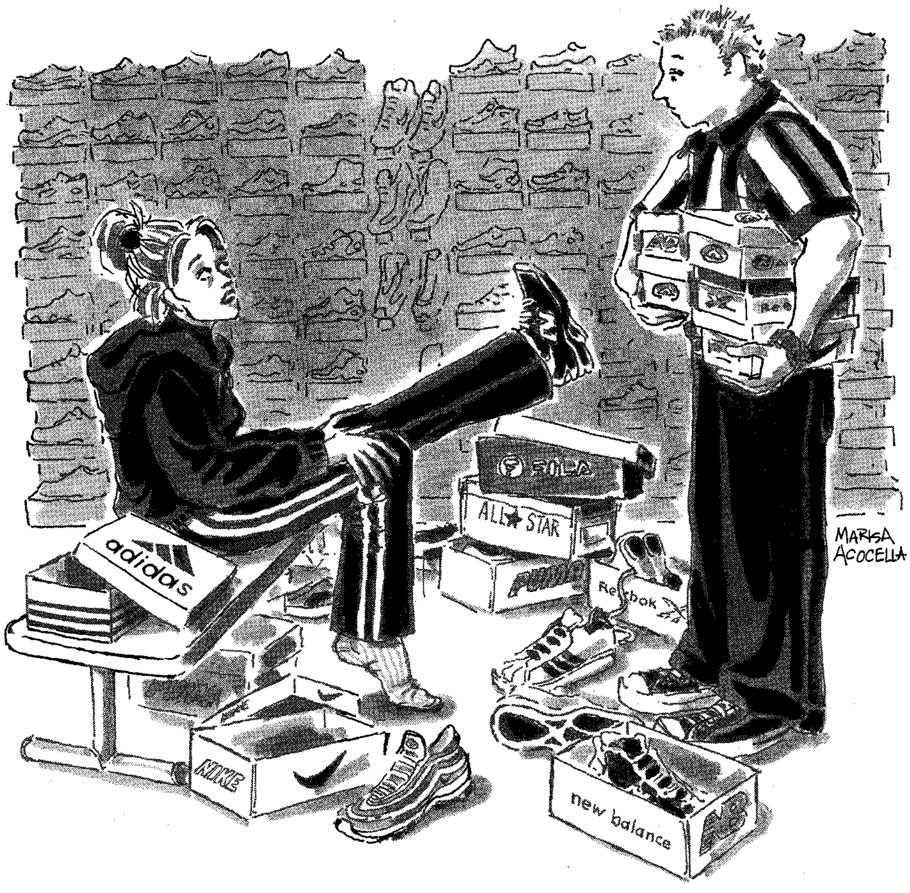
Kirstein had several assignments during his tour of duty. He worked for a while as a driver for General George Patton and other officers and then was assigned to the Third Army's Monuments, Fine Arts, and Archives Division, which was responsible for trying to recapture or save art that had been looted by the Nazis or damaged by the fighting. In late April of 1945, Kirstein and his comrades burst into the Schloss Veldenstein, in Germany, where Göring himself had been staying until only hours before. With macabre humor, Kirstein, a Jew, wrote home to his family in the States on the Reichsmarschall's personal notepaper, as if he were Göring's guest.

Reflecting a universe of shattered order, Standard English in his poems is as dead as the idea of decorum (in poetry or in warfare), and a strange, one-off idiom grows up in its place. In "La Grange," for instance, a group of innocent young American soldiers find themselves at a farm, apparently the epitome of Old World civilization ("The pear espaliered on old brick—complete: farm, garden, manse— / The frugal elegance of man, all that is best of France"). They are standing around aimlessly when something odd happens:

We dial our radio on New York and,
  hypnotized, all but forget
The state of war, the facts of life; the
  dirt, the distance, and the wet.
A cow, two years unserviced, blood
  burning, makes her choice:
She mounts a sister. We stare rapt. Jazz
  lends its Technicolor voice.

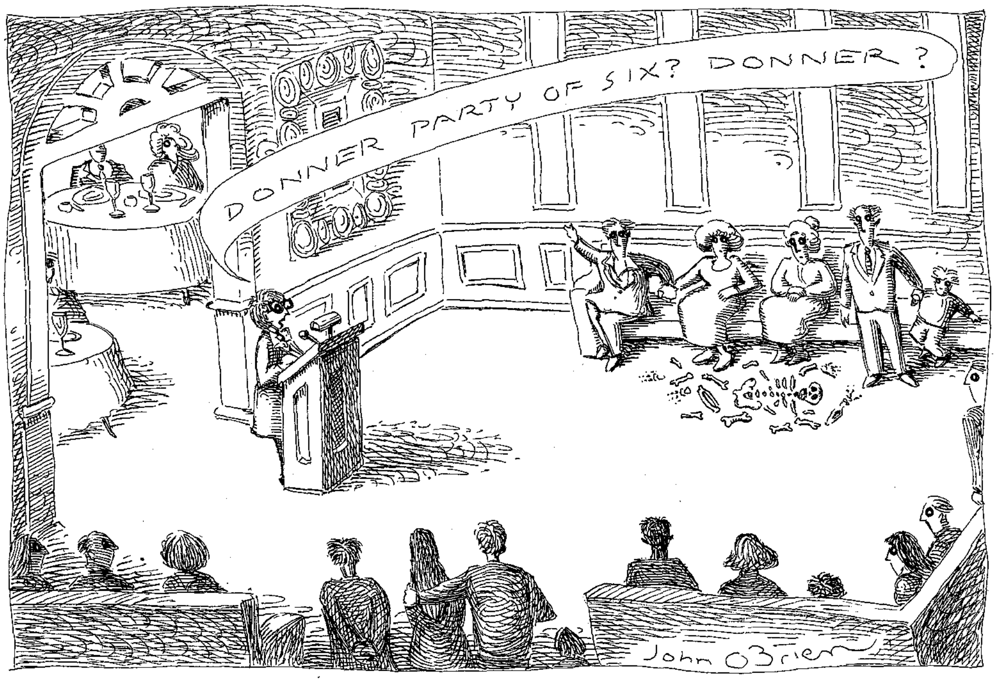
In the theatre, Kirstein was an authority figure and a leader—a cultural general, if ever there was one. In the Army, he was deep down in the ranks—in a social matrix that this patrician man would not otherwise have experienced. He didn't start to publish his poems about life among soldiers until the mid-fifties, when New York City Ballet was becoming more and more prominent in the world of dance. Through his social connections and his worldliness, Kirstein was establishing a cultural cachet for the company. In his prose he was providing an intellectual grounding and a balletic lineage for it. And in his poetry he found a way of writing about what it felt like, day in and day out, to struggle for a collective order in the midst of chaos, vanity, and human frailty. Incidents in the poems are, so to speak, *underwritten* by a warmth, a sympathy, an affectionate intimacy that must reflect Lincoln's identification with the dancers whom by then he was in charge of. In the Army he had lived among the troops in a way that was closed off to him with his troupe. "I do not permit myself the possibility of a continuous emotional relationship with anybody," he wrote to Buckle. "Least of all with my dancers, to whom I am both emotionally connected and sexually attracted. If I did, I wouldn't have a company." In his poems from the nineteen-fifties and sixties, then, he was able to find an outlet for all the things he didn't say in his severe dance monographs and program notes, and to speak from the bohemian and subaltern vantage point of the foot soldier he had once briefly been.

In March of 1947, Kirstein posted a notice at the School of American Ballet thanking the Ballet Society dancers who had performed the day before in premières of three new works—"The Minotaur," "Zodiac," and "Highland Fling." Army metaphors came to his mind as he wrote, and he stressed the continuity he felt between life in the service and civilian life in service to dance. He told the dancers, "We are creating, slowly and painfully, a new repertory, with completely new means, new musicians, new painters (who do



"I can't decide. I'm having a brand identity crisis."

not have a great deal of experience), and new choreographers. It means that everyone works twice as hard; it is producing under combat conditions." It was just a year later, in 1948—exactly fifty years ago now—that, in the aftermath of war and among all the new artistic and civic formations that were then coalescing, New York City Ballet, Balanchine's and Kirstein's final and permanent company, was formed. That, Kirstein wrote as he looked back, was "the end of our beginnings."


DONNER PARTY OF SIX? DONNER?
John O'Brien

AFTER Lincoln's death, two years ago, I felt troubled by a sense of his absence and, at the same time, by a less explicable sense of his ghostly, enduring closeness to me. It took me some time to work out why. As long as I had known him, and after all the conversations we had had together or I had heard him have with others, I realized that I had never once known him to use the word "goodbye." If he was leaving you in the street, he would usually just wave and walk briskly away. On the phone, once the substance of the conversation was over, he would immediately hang up without any small talk, let alone a farewell. (I remember hearing him tell one old friend, at the end of a call in which the man had broken the news that he was dying of cancer, "I am praying for you." And then he simply put down the phone.) A meeting with him would often come to an end with his saying "O.K." and giving a little nod—the signal for you to leave him.

The last of the many books he wrote—"Mosaic," a volume of shards of memoir—concludes with an ellipsis, not a period; the final sentence dwindles but never finishes. An account of his early youth, ending in London in 1933, the volume launches him forward into the main part of his life, but that is left undescribed. "I was alone now," he writes. "And I knew I must find Balanchine if I was serious about anything . . ." This avoidance of endings and farewells within Kirstein's life is part of what makes the continuity of his great achievements in the theatre, the fifty dazzling years of the City Ballet, so moving and admirable. The company and the school are two of the very few theatrical institutions that have survived the deaths of their heroic, more-than-life-size creators.

The poet James Merrill once suggested that our lives are "fiction in disguise." In thinking about Lincoln's life, I feel my mind filling with reverberations from fiction as much as memory, in particular the fiction of Henry James—like Kirstein, an internationalist from New York. James has a short story entitled "The Private Life," in which the main character, Clare Vawdrey (modelled on Robert Browning), seems to be incongruously both a gregarious socializer and an aesthetic hermit. Toward the close of the story, the narrator opens a bedroom door upstairs in a hotel, and in the darkness of the unlighted room in front of him he sees Vawdrey writing alone in the gloom. He is baffled, because, in defiance of physical laws, this is the same man whom downstairs "an instant before, I had to the best of my belief left below in conversation with Mrs. Adney." Lincoln, in "Thirty Years," speaks of learning, during a stay in Kyoto, about "nin-jitsu, the skill of samurai espionage: sudden vanishment and bilocation, the art of being seen in two distinct places at once—a mystery to be mastered by all theater directors." Practically and perhaps also psychologically, Lincoln was in two distinct places at once—because he wanted to be, and because he couldn't help being. He sought to be retiring, but he was all the more noticeable as he tried to be invisible. He was a married, uncloseted gay man. He was a dance historian and a dance prophet. He was a promulgator of order who was fascinated and energized by the ubiquity of disorder. He was a shy individual who never backed away from conflict. (Philip Johnson, at Kirstein's memorial, in the State Theatre, spoke feelingly of arguments that had gone on for ten or twenty years.) And Lincoln could turn on you, as I found out, a fierce and stressful degree of kindness.

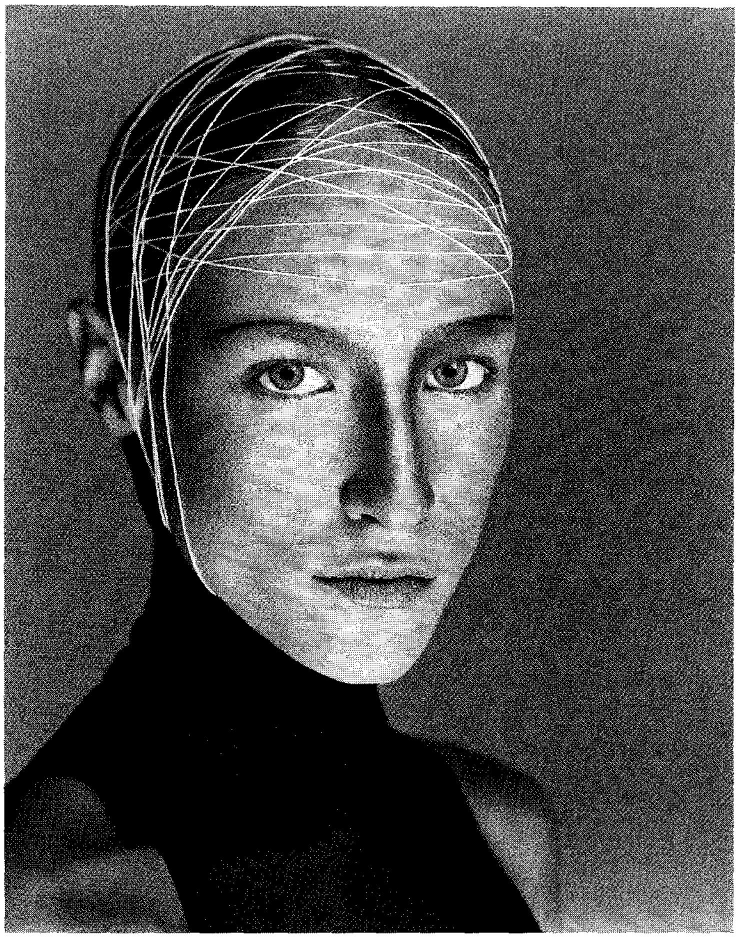
"I'm as much in the dark as ever," says a baffled acolyte in James's great story "The Figure in the Carpet," as he tries to make sense of what an eminent writer has confided to him. "We work in the dark," a dying writer says to a young, fawning admirer, in another tale of James's, "The Middle Years." "We do what we can—we give what we have. Our doubt is our passion and our passion is our task. The rest is the madness of art." The character's words seem to superimpose onto my sense of Lincoln Kirstein's life and of my minor and transient relations with him. I knew him. I didn't know him. I'm still in the dark, advancing down a corridor toward a gleam of light and a very tall man who has his arms crossed as he stares skeptically into the darkness. ◆

PORTFOLIO

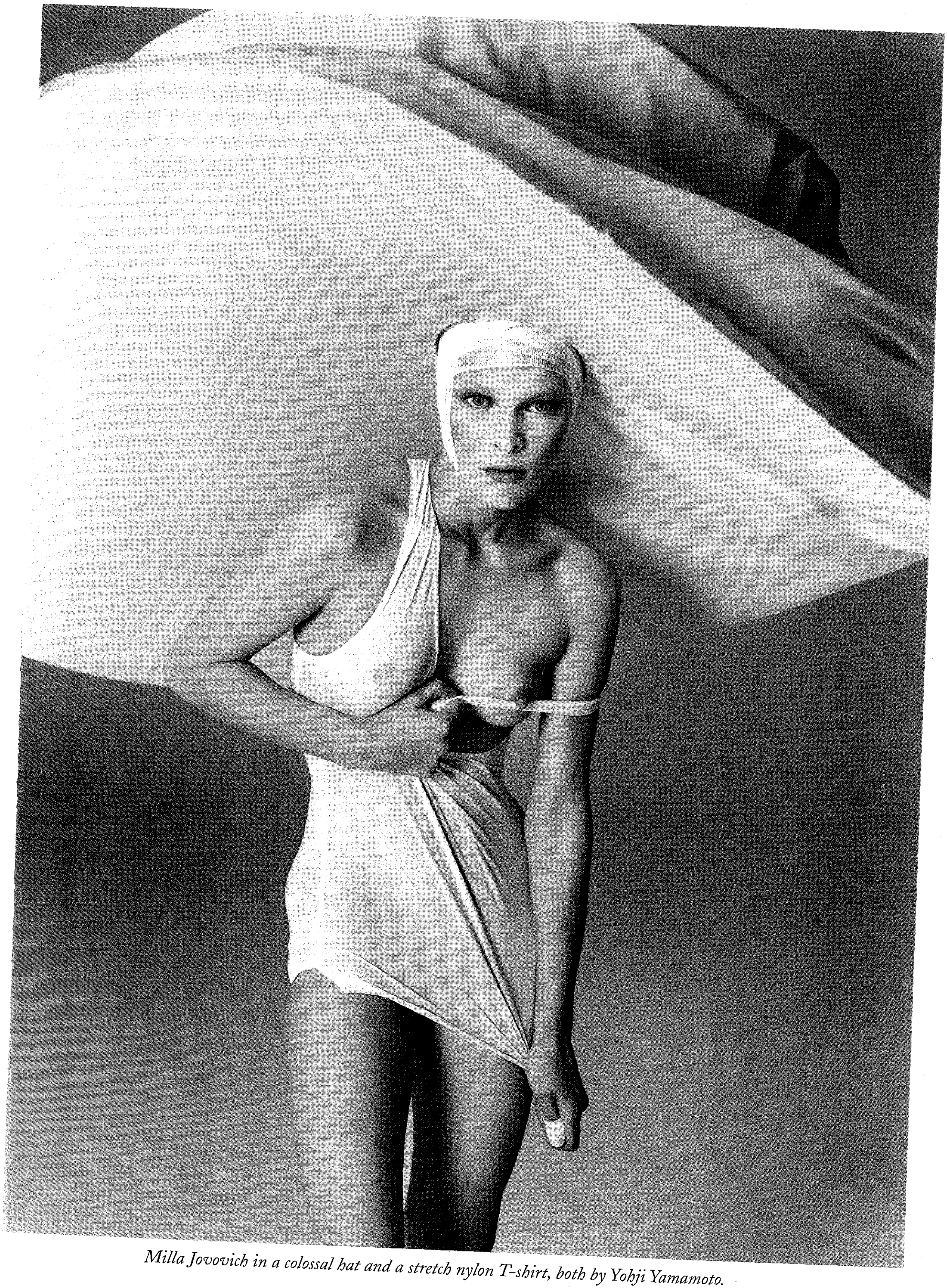
COSTUME DRAMA

PHOTOGRAPHS BY RICHARD AVEDON

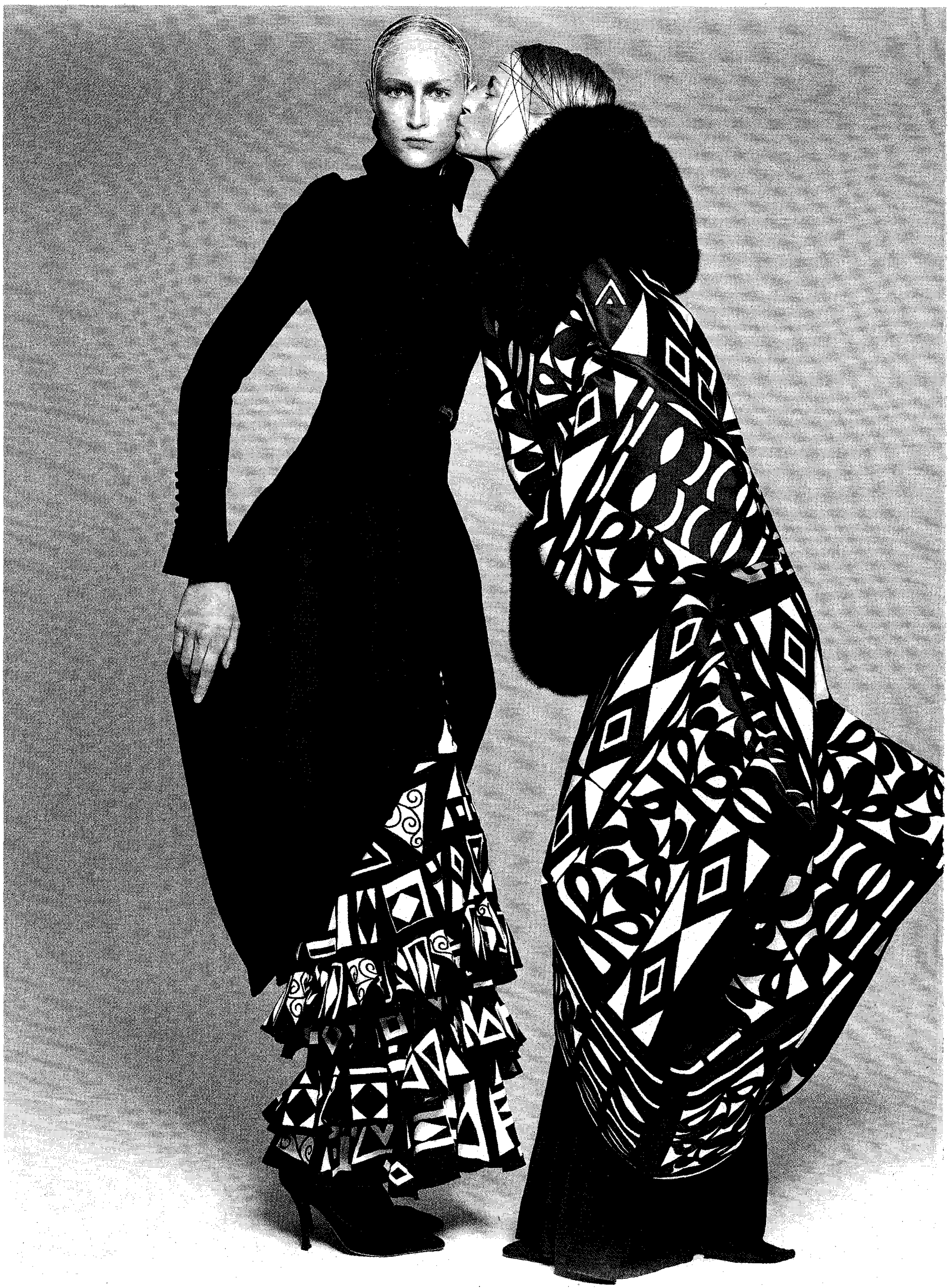
As with the Roundheads and the Cavaliers and the mods and the rockers, the world of fashion has found itself, in recent seasons, intractably divided into two camps: the minimalist and the baroque. Yohji Yamamoto, John Galliano, and Jean Paul Gaultier, for their part, all have long been rocking Cavaliers, designers who have not forgotten the pre-modern notion that clothing might also be costume. Yamamoto's hat, puffed up like an enormous brioche, is part of an outlandish wedding outfit, suitable for a ceremony through the looking glass. (On the runway, the model was assisted by a quartet of men in black who held the hat aloft with bamboo poles.) This season, Galliano turned to the tenets of Art Deco to demonstrate that clean lines and precise shapes do not necessarily lead to minimalism. His geometric-print dress and coat are strictly formal while also being arch and extravagant; the exaggeratedly high collar on his sleeveless dress gives an otherwise simple silhouette a mannered complexity. And Gaultier continued the mischievous, eccentric gender games he has been playing for years, which, given the political preoccupations of the moment, seem to resonate all the more. After all, who gets to be the skirt chaser when both sexes are wearing skirts? —REBECCA MEAD



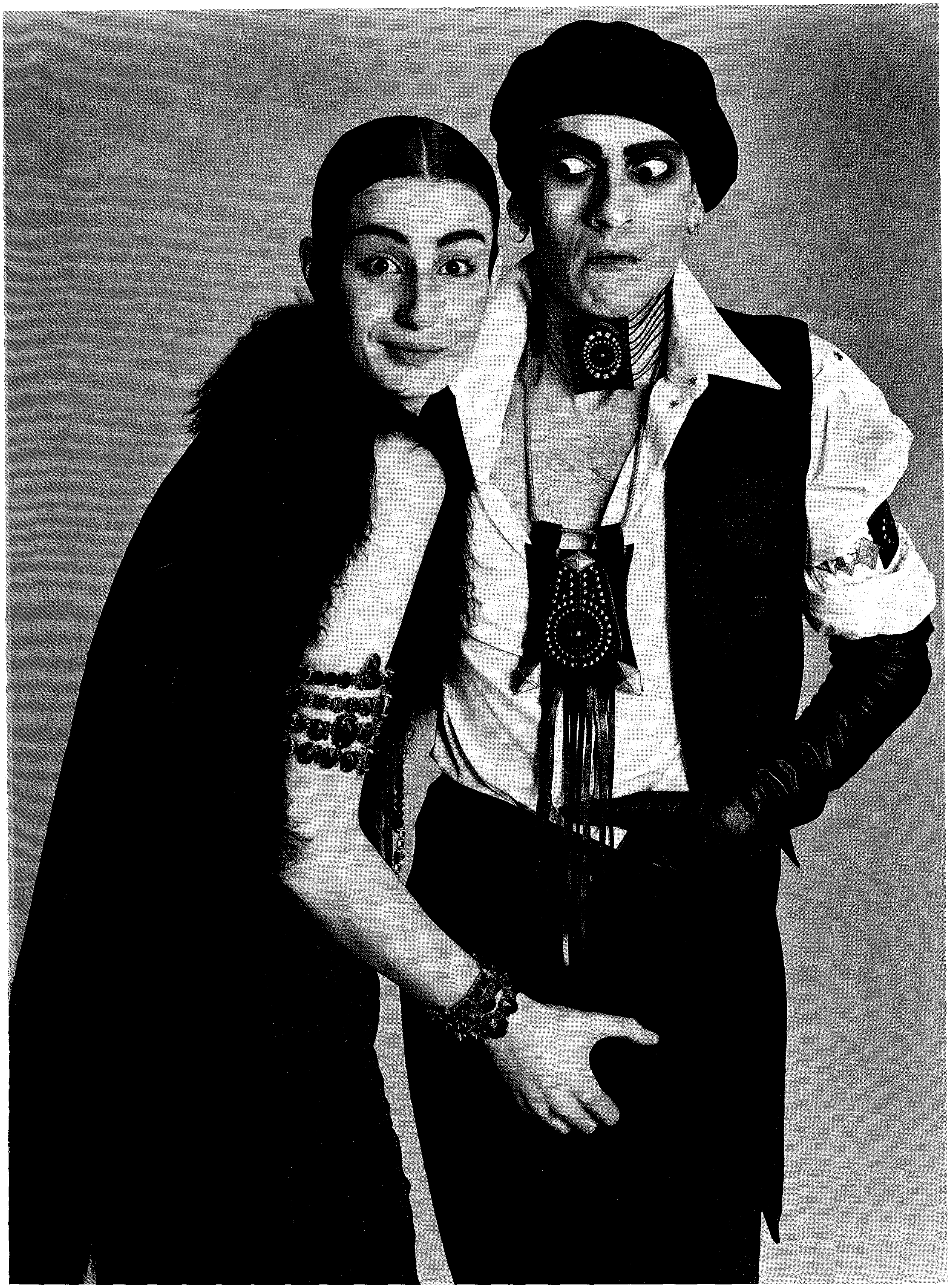
Jade Parfitt in a sleeveless dress by John Galliano. London, March 26, 1998.



Milla Jovovich in a colossal hat and a stretch nylon T-shirt, both by Yohji Yamamoto.



Jade Parfitt and Esther De Jong in Art Deco ensembles by Galliano and shoes by Manolo Blahnik.



in O'Connor and Lionel Vermeil in ensembles by Jean Paul Gaultier. Styled by Nicoletta Santoro; head style, Julien d'Ys; makeup, Stephane Marais.

FICTION

SHAKESPEARE'S MEMORY

What was the playwright's mind really like?

BY JORGE LUIS BORGES

THERE are devotees of Goethe, of the Edda, of the late song of the Nibelungen; my fate has been Shakespeare. As it still is, though in a way that no one could have foreseen—no one save one man, Daniel Thorpe, who just recently died in Pretoria. There is another man, too, whose face I have never seen.

My name is Hermann Sörgel. The curious reader may have chanced to leaf through my "Shakespeare Chronology," which I once considered essential to a proper understanding of the texts; it was translated into several languages, including Spanish. Nor is it beyond the realm of possibility that the reader will recall a protracted diatribe against an emendation Theobald inserted into his critical edition of 1734—an emendation which became from that moment on an unquestioned part of the canon. Today I am a little taken aback by the uncivil tone of those pages of mine, which I might almost say were written by another man. In 1914 I drafted, but did not publish, an article on the compound words that the Hellenist and dramatist George Chapman coined for his versions of Homer; in forging these terms, Chapman did not realize that he had carried English back to its Anglo-Saxon origins, the *Ursprung* of the language. It never occurred to me then that Chapman's voice, which I have now forgotten, might one day be so familiar to me. . . . A scattering of critical and philological "notes," as they are called, signed with my initials, complete, I believe, my literary biography. Although perhaps I might also be permitted to include an unpublished translation of "Macbeth," which I began in order to distract my mind from the death of my brother, Otto Julius, who fell on the Western front in 1917. I never finished translating the play; I came to realize that English has (to its credit) two registers—the Germanic and the Latinate—while our own German, in spite of its greater musicality, must content itself with one.

I mentioned Daniel Thorpe. I was introduced to Thorpe by Major Barclay at a Shakespeare conference. I will not say where or when; I know all too well that such specifics are in fact vaguenesses.

More important than Daniel Thorpe's face, which my partial blindness helps me to forget, was his notorious lucklessness. When a man reaches a certain age, there are many things he can simulate; happiness is not one of them. Daniel Thorpe gave off an almost physical air of melancholy.

After a long session, night found us in a pub—an undistinguished place that might have been any pub in London. To make ourselves feel that we were in England (which of course we were), we drained many a ritual pewter mug of dark warm beer.

"In Punjab," said the Major in the course of our conversation, "a fellow once pointed out a beggar to me. Islamic legend apparently has it, you know, that King Solomon owned a ring that allowed him to understand the language of the birds. And this particular beggar, so everyone believed, had somehow come into possession of that ring. The value of the thing was so beyond all reckoning that the poor bugger could never sell it, and he died in one of the courtyards of the mosque of Wazir Khan, in Lahore."

It occurred to me that Chaucer must have been familiar with the tale of that miraculous ring, but mentioning it would have spoiled Barclay's anecdote.

"And what became of the ring?" I asked.

"Lost now, of course, as that sort of magical thingamajig always is. Probably in some secret hiding place in the mosque, or on the finger of some chap who's off living somewhere where there're no birds."

"Or where there are so many," I noted, "that one can't make out what they're saying for the racket. Your story has something of the parable about it, Barclay."

It was at that point that Daniel Thorpe spoke up. He spoke, somehow, impersonally, without looking at us. His English had a peculiar accent, which I attributed to a long stay in the East.

"It is not a parable," he said. "Or if it is, it is nonetheless a true story. There are things that have a price so high they can never be sold."

The words I am attempting to reconstruct impressed me less than the conviction with which Daniel Thorpe spoke them. We thought he was going to say something further, but suddenly he fell mute, as though he regretted having spoken at all. Barclay said good night. Thorpe and I returned together to the hotel. It was quite late by now, but Thorpe suggested we continue our conversation in his room. After a short exchange of trivialities, he said to me:

"Would you like to own King Solomon's ring? I offer it to you. That's a metaphor, of course, but the thing the metaphor stands for is every bit as wondrous as the ring. Shakespeare's memory, from his youngest boyhood days to early April, 1616—I offer it to you."

I could not get a single word out. It was as though I had been offered the ocean.

Thorpe went on:

"I am not an impostor. I am not insane. I beg you to suspend judgment until you hear me out. Major Barclay no doubt told you that I am, or was, a

FILIP PAGOWSKI

military physician. The story can be told very briefly. It begins in the East, in a field hospital, at dawn. The exact date is not important. An enlisted man named Adam Clay, who had been shot twice, offered me the precious memory almost literally with his last breath. Pain and fever, as you know, make us creative; I accepted his offer without crediting it. Besides, after a battle, nothing seems so very strange. He barely had time to explain the singular conditions of the gift. The one who possesses it must offer it aloud, and the one who is to receive it must accept it the same way. The man who gives it loses it forever."

The name of the soldier and the pathetic scene of the bestowal struck me as "literary," in the worst sense of the word. It all made me somewhat leery.

"And you, now, possess Shakespeare's memory?"

"What I possess," Thorpe answered, "are still two memories—my own personal memory and the memory of the Shakespeare that I partially am. Or, rather, two memories possess *me*. There is a place where they merge, somehow. There is a woman's face. . . . I am not sure what century it belongs to."

"And the memory that was Shakespeare's—" I asked. "What have you done with it?"

There was a silence.

"I have written a fictionalized biography," he said at last, "which garnered the contempt of critics but won some small commercial success in the United States and the colonies. I believe that's all. . . . I have warned you that my gift is not a sinecure. I am still waiting for your answer."

I sat thinking. Had I not spent a lifetime (however colorless and ordinary) in pursuit of Shakespeare? Was it not fair that, at the end of my labors, I find him?

I said, carefully pronouncing each word:

"I accept Shakespeare's memory."

Something happened; of that there is no doubt. But I did not feel it happen.

Maybe just a slight sense of fatigue, perhaps imaginary.

I clearly recall that Thorpe did tell me:

"The memory has entered your mind, but it must be 'discovered.' It will emerge in dreams, or when you are awake, when you turn the pages of a book, or turn a corner. Don't be impatient; don't *invent* recollections. Chance in its mysterious workings may help you along, or it may hold you back. As I gradually forget, you will remember. I cannot tell you how long the process will take."

We dedicated what remained of the night to a discussion of the character of Shylock. I refrained from trying to discover whether Shakespeare had had personal dealings with Jews. I did not want Thorpe to imagine that I was putting him to some sort of test. I did discover (whether with relief or uneasiness, I cannot say) that his opinions were as academic and conventional as my own.

In spite of that long night without sleep, I hardly slept at all the following night. I found, as I had so many times before, that I was a coward. Out of fear of disappointment, I could not deliver myself up to openhanded hope. I preferred to think that Thorpe's gift was illusory. But hope did, irresistibly, come to prevail. I would possess Shakespeare, and possess him as no one had ever possessed anyone before—not in love, or friendship, or even hatred. I, in some way, would *be* Shakespeare. Not that I would write the tragedies or the intricate sonnets—but I would recall the instant at which the witches (who are also the Fates) had been revealed to me, the other instant at which I had been given the vast lines:

> And shake the yoke of inauspicious stars
> From this world-wearied flesh.

I would remember Anne Hathaway as I remembered that mature woman who taught me the ways of love in an apartment in Lübeck so many years ago. (I tried to recall that woman, but I could only recover the wallpaper, which was yellow, and the light that streamed in through the window. This first failure might have foreshadowed those to come.)

I had hypothesized that the images of that wondrous memory would be primarily visual. Such was not the case. Days later, as I was shaving, I spoke into the mirror a string of words that puzzled me; a colleague informed me that they were from Chaucer's "A.B.C." One afternoon, as I was leaving the British Museum, I began whistling a very simple melody that I had never heard before.

The reader will surely have noted the common thread that links these first revelations of the memory: it was, despite the splendor of some metaphors, a good deal more auditory than visual.

De Quincey says that man's brain is a palimpsest. Every new text covers the previous one, and is in turn covered by the text that follows—but all-powerful Memory is able to exhume any impression, no matter how momentary it might have been, if given sufficient stimulus. To judge by the will he left, there was not a single book in Shakespeare's house, not even the Bible, and yet everyone is familiar with the books he so often repaired to: Chaucer, Gower, Spenser, Christopher Marlowe, Holinshed's "Chronicles," Florio's Montaigne, North's Plutarch. I possessed, at least potentially, the memory that had been Shakespeare's; the reading (which is to say the rereading) of those old volumes would be the stimulus I sought. I also reread the sonnets, which are his works of greatest immediacy. Once in a while I came up with the explication, or with many explications. Good lines demand to be read aloud; after a few days I had effortlessly recovered the harsh "r"s and open vowels of the sixteenth century.

In an article I published in the *Zeitschrift für Germanische Philologie*, I wrote that Sonnet 127 referred to the memorable defeat of the Spanish Armada. I had forgotten that Samuel Butler advanced that same thesis in 1899.

A visit to Stratford-upon-Avon was, predictably enough, sterile.

Then came the gradual transformation of my dreams. I was to be granted neither splendid nightmares à la De Quincey nor pious allegorical visions in the manner of his master Jean Paul; it was unknown rooms and faces that entered my nights. The first face I identified was Chapman's; later there was Ben Jonson's, and the face of one of the poet's neighbors, a person who does not figure in the biographies but whom Shakespeare often saw.

The man who acquires an encyclopedia does not thereby acquire every line, every paragraph, every page, and every illustration; he acquires the *possibility* of becoming familiar with one and another of those things. If that is the case with a concrete, and relatively simple, entity (given, I mean, the alphabetical order of its parts, etc.), then what must happen with a thing that is abstract and variable—*ondoyant et divers*? A dead man's magical memory, for example?

No one may capture in a single instant the fullness of his entire past. That gift was never granted even to Shakespeare, as far as I know, much less to me, who was but his partial heir. A man's memory is not a summation; it is a chaos of vague possibilities. St. Augustine, if I am not mistaken, speaks of the palaces and the caverns of memory. The second metaphor is the more fitting one. It was into those caverns that I descended.

Like our own, Shakespeare's memory included regions, broad regions, of shadow—regions that he willfully shunned. It was not without shock that I remembered how Ben Jonson had made him recite Latin and Greek hexameters, and how his ear—the incomparable ear of Shakespeare—would go astray in many of them, to the hilarity of his fellows.

I knew states of happiness and of darkness that transcend common human experience.

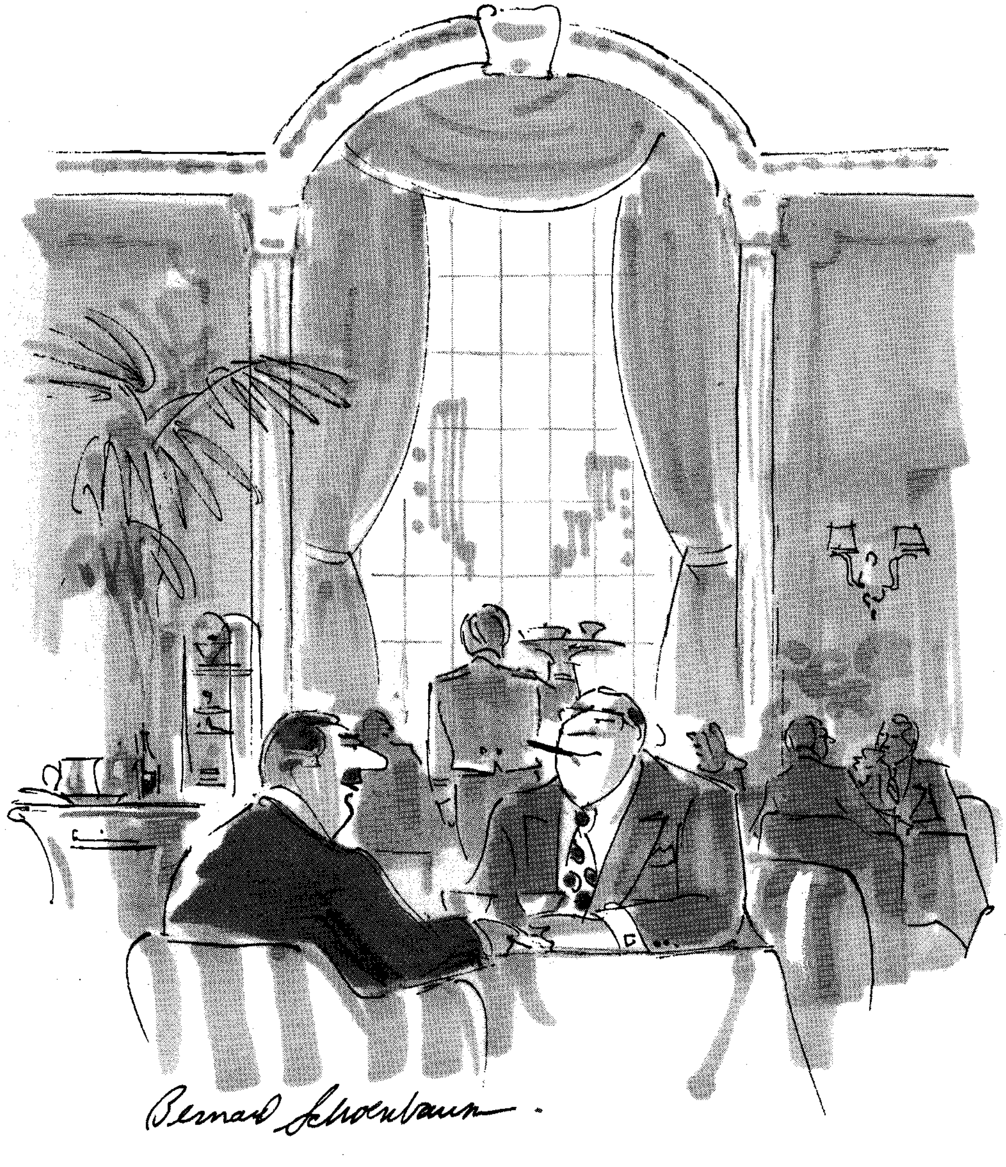
Without my realizing it, long and studious solitude had prepared me for the docile reception of this miracle. After some thirty days, the dead man's memory had come to animate me fully. For one curiously happy week, I almost believed myself Shakespeare. His work renewed itself for me. I knew that for Shakespeare the moon was less the moon than it was Diana, and less Diana than that dark drawn-out word "moon." I noted another discovery: Shakespeare's apparent instances of inadvertence—those *absences dans l'infini* of which Hugo speaks apologetically—were deliberate. Shakespeare tolerated them—or actually interpolated them—so that his discourse, destined for the stage, might appear to be spontaneous, and not overly polished and artificial (*nicht allzu glatt und gekünstelt*). That same goal inspired him to mix his metaphors:

> my way of life
> Is fall'n into the sear, the yellow leaf.

One morning I perceived a sense of guilt deep within his memory. I did not try to define it; Shakespeare himself has done so for all time. Suffice it to say that the offense had nothing in common with perversion.

I realized that the three faculties of the human soul—memory, understanding, and will—are not some mere scholastic fiction. Shakespeare's memory was able to reveal to me only the circumstances of *the man* Shakespeare. Clearly, these circumstances do not constitute the uniqueness of *the poet;* what matters is the literature the poet produced with that frail material.

I was naïve enough to contemplate a biography, just as Thorpe had. I soon discovered, however, that that literary genre required a talent for writing that I did not possess. I do not know how to tell a story. I do not know how to tell *my own* story, which is a great deal more extraordinary than Shakespeare's. Besides, such a book would be pointless. Chance, or fate, dealt Shakespeare those trivial terrible things that all men know; it was his gift to be able to transmute them into fables, into characters that were much more alive than the gray man who dreamed them, into verses which the generations will never abandon, into verbal music. What purpose would it serve to unravel that wondrous fabric, besiege and mine the tower, reduce to the modest proportions of a documentary



"You'll like the emphasis he places on money."

UNDERWATER

They never knew where he was—
Pickled every evening by five,
Prowling fierce and convivial
Down the tottery back stairs—

And still don't, even here
With tubes down him
To his duodenum.

She'd like to reach her hand
Across the cities—a stem
Of coral with green leaves on it—
And provide a bowl

Of silverberries
Glowing five colors at once,
Or red jelly laughing beans

To the small wild man
In hospital at last,
Smoldering under sedation—
Bugger this for a lark—

And letting go
His renal system, his left lung.
Taking pride in smiling

At the surgeon still
With half a face.
And a lipoma,
A greedy mahogany udder

Sucking like a puppy:
A sea anemone
Under his sawed-through jaw.

—Ruth Padel

---

biography or a realistic novel the sound and fury of "Macbeth"?

Goethe, as we all know, is Germany's official religion; the worship of Shakespeare, which we profess not without nostalgia, is more private. (In England, the official religion is Shakespeare, who is so unlike the English; England's sacred book, however, is the Bible.)

Throughout the first stage of this adventure I felt the joy of being Shakespeare; throughout the last, terror and oppression. At first the waters of the two memories did not mix; in time, the great torrent of Shakespeare threatened to flood my own modest stream—and very nearly did so. I noted with some nervousness that I was gradually forgetting the language of my parents. Since personal identity is based on memory, I feared for my sanity.

My friends would visit me; I was astonished that they could not see that I was in hell.

I began not to understand the everyday world around me (*die alltägliche Umwelt*). One morning I became lost in a welter of great shapes forged in iron, wood, and glass. Shrieks and deafening noises assailed and confused me. It took me some time (it seemed an infinity) to recognize the engines and cars of the Bremen railway station.

As the years pass, every man is forced to bear the growing burden of his memory. I staggered beneath the two (which sometimes mingled)—my own and the incommunicable other's.

The wish of all things, Spinoza says, is to continue to be what they are. The stone wishes to be stone, the tiger, tiger—and I wanted to be Hermann Sörgel again.

I have forgotten the date on which I decided to free myself. I hit upon the easiest way: I dialled telephone numbers at random. The voice of a child or a woman would answer; I believed it was my duty to respect their vulnerable estates. At last a man's refined voice answered.

"Do you," I asked, "want Shakespeare's memory? Consider well: it is a solemn thing I offer, as I can attest."

An incredulous voice replied:

"I will take that risk. I accept Shakespeare's memory."

I explained the conditions of the gift. Paradoxically, I felt both a *nostalgie* for the book I should have written, and now never would, and a fear that the guest, the spectre, would never abandon me.

I hung up the receiver and repeated, like a wish, these resigned words:

> Simply the thing I am shall make me live.

I had invented exercises to awaken the antique memory; I had to seek others to erase it. One of many was the study of the mythology of William Blake, that rebellious disciple of Swedenborg. I found it to be less complex than merely complicated.

That and other paths were futile; all led me to Shakespeare.

I hit at last upon the only solution that gave hope courage: strict, vast music—Bach.

P.S. (1924)—I am now a man among men. In my waking hours I am Professor Emeritus Hermann Sörgel; I putter about the card catalogue and compose erudite trivialities, but at dawn I sometimes know that the person dreaming is that other man. Every so often in the evening I am unsettled by small, fleeting memories that are perhaps authentic. ◆

(*Translated, from the Spanish, by Andrew Hurley.*)

BOOKS

SOUND AND SILENCE

What made Alexander Graham Bell invent the telephone?

BY JOSEPH EPSTEIN

THE Russian peasant Piotyr, in Kishinev in 1910, is so astonished by the telephone, which he has just seen in use for the first time, that he asks his better-educated friend Ivan how this amazing invention works.

"Very simple," Ivan says. "Imagine a dog so large it stretches from Kishinev to Odessa. You step on the dog's tail in Kishinev and it barks in Odessa. Do you follow that?"

"Yes, I think so," Piotyr says, hesitantly.

"Good," Ivan says. "Now remove the dog."

The target of this joke is the inherent fragility of analogies and metaphors in reasoning. And a superior joke it is, but I would like it a little better if I myself knew how telephones really work. After reading James Mackay's admirably concise and lucid biography "Alexander Graham Bell" (Wiley; $30), which gives a careful account of the importance of undulatory current, variable resistance, and electromagnetism to the invention of the telephone, I can make a better pretense of comprehending its functioning. But, in truth, the telephone remains, for me, slightly miraculous. Please return the dog.

Not that my ignorance has prevented me from having two telephone lines and five phones in my apartment, and another phone in my car. Like most people, I suppose, I both love and hate the telephone. I absolutely require it, do not easily imagine life without it, yet resent its intrusion into my life.

The painter Jean-Louis Forain, who had one of the first telephones in Paris, invited Edgar Degas over for dinner to show him the new contraption. Degas, good reactionary that he was, was not impressed. Then, in the middle of dinner, the phone rang, causing Forain to leap from his chair to answer it. "Ah," Degas said. "The telephone. Now I understand—it rings, you jump." Quite so. We jump because we are hopeful that the phone will bring us word of an interesting proposition, one that may—just may—change our lives. More likely nowadays, though, the caller is only someone trying to persuade us to switch to M.C.I.

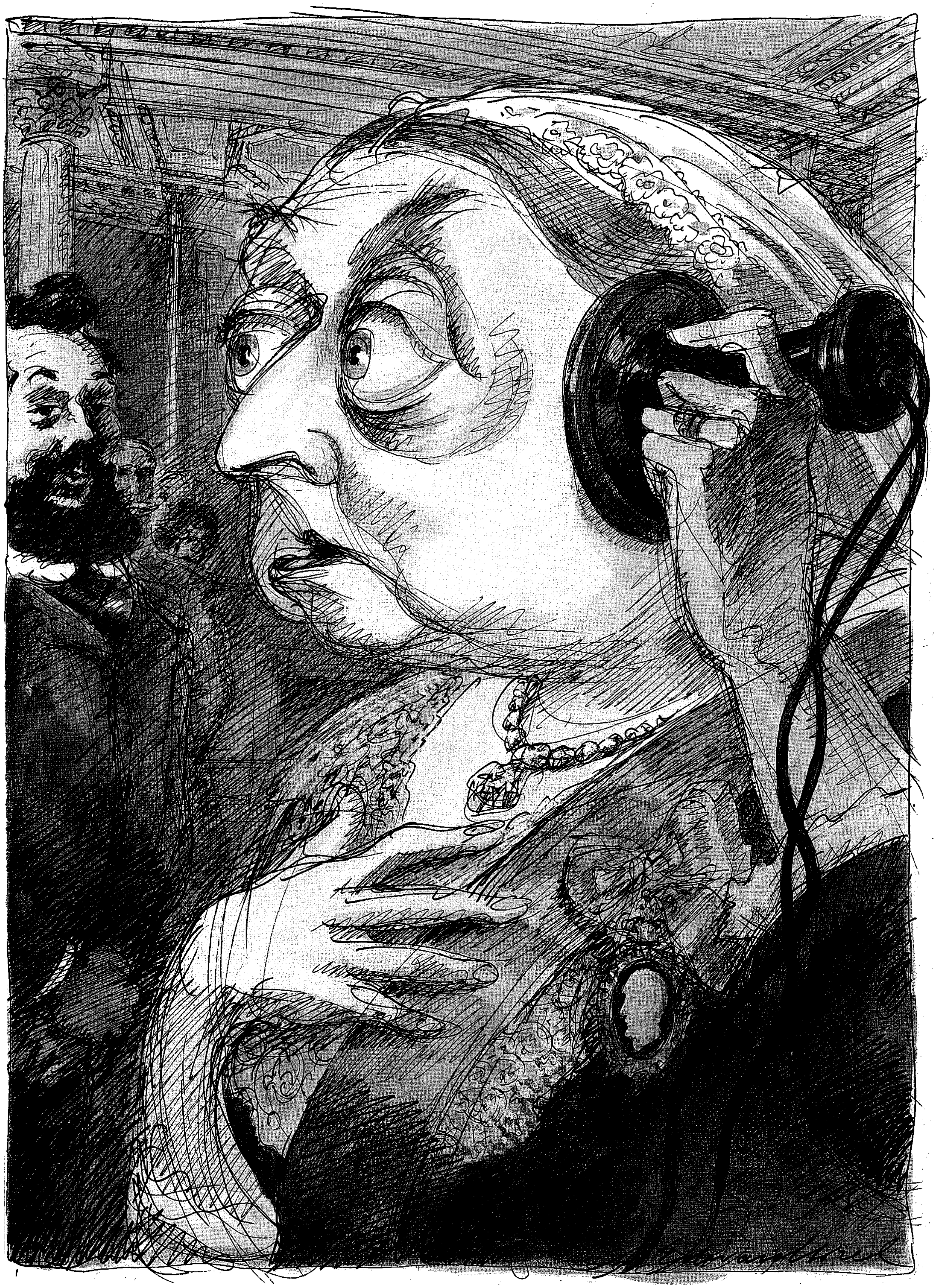
Alexander Graham Bell, the inventor of the telephone, didn't seem to have much personal use for it himself. He was a night owl and a man who loved solitude (he answered the phone by saying not "Hello" but "Ahoy!"), and he enjoyed few things more than to be alone in nature, where he could dreamily think up new inventions. Inventors are a strange breed: they differ both from scientists and from artists, yet partake of the qualities of each. They tend in general not to be especially well educated, sometimes even in the field of their own work. Bell himself felt deficient in mathematics and in his knowledge of electricity.

Some inventors mine a single rich vein of invention, as Bell seemed to do at first, working in telegraphy and related fields, of which the telephone now seems the logical conclusion. Other inventors will be all over the court. Jerome Murray, for example, who died this past January, was the inventor of the electric carving knife, the audible pressure cooker, the television rotator antenna, the airplane boarding ramp, and—stepping up the significance quotient greatly now—the pump that made open-heart surgery possible. "Science and marketing can be learned," Murray once remarked, "but inspiration comes from within." There is something to that, but knowledge of why inspiration strikes some and not others can be acquired only in individual cases. No case, perhaps, is more impressive than that of Alexander Graham Bell, in part because Bell left a voluminous record of his own technological wanderings, and in part because the invention of the telephone has had so momentous an effect on quotidian life.

BELL was the second of three sons born to Melville and Eliza Bell, in Edinburgh, in 1847. Melville Bell was a teacher of elocution, who wrote a popular book entitled "The Standard Elocutionist," and he had an enduring interest in transforming the findings of phonetics and philology into something he called visible speech, through which he hoped to facilitate global communication. This was no doubt in part because Eliza Bell had become effectively deaf at the age of thirteen, and listened to the world through an ear trumpet. Alexander Bell, in his childhood, had an abundance of talent. He could sight-read music and he had a natural scientific bent, which led him to botanizing and to collecting birds' eggs. He loved animals and was gentle in his treatment of them. Before he was thirteen he had turned his mind to invention, coming up with a machine, for the father of a friend, that scraped the husks off wheat. Nevertheless, Bell was in that class of geniuses who are not very good students. He did the classics as opposed to modern or scientific studies in Edinburgh, and, as his biographer notes, "did not distinguish himself in any way." He left school at the age of fifteen.

Only under the guidance of his paternal grandfather, in London, with whom he then went to live, did Bell catch intellectual fire. His grandfather read English literature with him, and treated him as an adult. In response, young Bell became precociously mature. He returned to Scotland and at the age of sixteen taught music and elocution to high-school boys, some of whom were older than he was. He then put in a few years at London University, concentrating on physiology and anatomy. Among his London acquaintances were James Murray, who would one day become the founding editor of the Oxford English Dictionary, and Henry Sweet, the grammarian on whom George Bernard Shaw would partly model Professor Henry Higgins. But Bell never finished his course of study. All the degrees he ever received—a dozen, by his biographer's count—would be honorary ones.

In 1870, Bell's parents decided to emigrate to America, where Melville Bell's lectures on visible speech had a large fol-



Victoria, with one of Bell's early phone receivers pressed to her ear, listened to a rather poor rendition of "God Save the Queen."

"I think it's your cap, Slim. The cows don't see you as an authority figure."

• •

lowing among educators and the general public. Alexander's two brothers had died—the younger in 1867, the older in 1870, both of tuberculosis—and, as the only remaining son, he hadn't much choice but to join his parents. It's fortunate that he did so. At the age of twenty-three, he was darkly handsome and impressively energetic, but his capacious talents had not yet found their true objects. They did in America, where his first job was teaching at a school for the deaf, in Boston. He excelled at it, taking on a number of private students, with whom he achieved a high rate of success. (His future wife, Mabel Hubbard, was one of them.) He believed in teaching the deaf speech, lipreading, and anything else that would not confine them to depending wholly on sign language. James Mackay reports that Bell always thought his main contribution to humanity was his work with the deaf, and that he always considered himself chiefly a teacher.

TEACHING deaf students set Bell to tinkering with inventions connected to sound, among them an electric piano and a multiple telegraph, which would send several messages at once over a single wire. But organization was not his specialty: as a young man, he easily fell into disarray by overcommitting himself. He would work on three or four inventions at once, paying his lab expenses out of his own pocket. Luckily, once he had turned in earnest to working on the telephone, he found an ally in his future father-in-law, Gardiner Hubbard, a wealthy lawyer who became one of Boston's most prominent entrepreneurs. Hubbard served Bell as goad, financier, conscience, and guide, and would become a key figure in his discovery.

Bell, however, never let up on his teaching commitments. In 1873, the recently opened Boston University had appointed him professor of vocal physiology and elocution, and he continued to work with private students. Owing to these responsibilities, he was usually able to work on the telephone only at night and on weekends. Bell was a twenty-hour-day man. Under the scourge of such a regimen, he lapsed from time to time into depression of a serious kind. All he had going for him, apart from his friends, were his lucid mind and his excitement about discovery. Something of that excitement is revealed in a letter written to Mabel Hubbard at 2 A.M.:

> I try to stop thinking but it's of no use—I cannot get the reins of my mind! . . . I am only disheartened at the immensity of the horizons opened out to me. . . . I feel like the first mariner in an unknown sea—uncertain which way to go.

Mackay does an excellent job of charting Bell's various premonitions, errors, important connections, eureka moments—in short, all the steps, *faux et vrais,* on his way to achieving the invention that was to give him a permanent place in history. But one comes away from his book even more amazed at how easily someone else might have come along to pick up all the prizes, for the invention of the telephone, like that of manned flight, was inevitable. (Robert V. Bruce, who in 1973 wrote a fuller biography of Bell than Mackay's, noted that all the scientific and technological groundwork was in place for the invention of the telephone by 1846, a year before Bell's birth.)

A German physicist named Philipp Reis worked on the invention for a while and gave it the name Telephon. (Reis's work was far less complete than Bell's, but Mackay reports that, to this day, Reis is regarded as the inventor of the telephone in Germany.) Elisha Gray, who later became a partner in Western Electric, was in almost perpetual competition with Bell over patents—a competition entailing costly litigation, which was in large part dealt with and paid for by Hubbard. Thomas Alva Edison was also on the trail of the telephone. Mackay merely touches on the subject of paranoia in invention—"Every night, [Bell] carefully tidied away his apparatus and locked the cover of his table as a precaution against 'the hands and eyes of curious domestics,' though what the household servants would have made of the tangle of wires is anyone's guess"—but paranoia must be no small part of any inventor's psychology, especially when he is near to closing in on an important discovery.

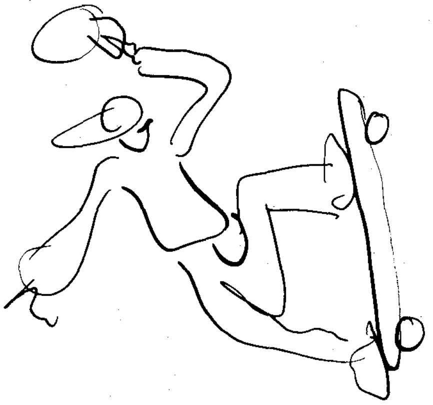
Then, on March 10, 1876, Bell placed the first successful telephone call. ("Mr. Watson—come here—I want to see you," he told an assistant in another room.) He had invented the telephone after less than three years of work, and he was not yet thirty years old. Bell turned out to be the man able to put all the technology together thanks to the fortuitous concatenation of his intelligence, his character, his luck, and even his ignorance. (He thought, for example, that if he had known more about electricity, it would only have deterred him from his discovery by sending him down false paths.) In the end, the inventor knew precisely what he had wrought. He wrote in 1878, in an open letter to the newly formed Electric Telephone Company of Great Britain, "The telephone may be briefly described as an electrical contrivance for reproducing in distant places the tones and articulations of a speaker's voice so that Conversation can be carried on by word of mouth between persons in different rooms, in different streets or in different Towns." He added, "The great advantage it possesses over every other form of electrical apparatus consists in the fact that it requires no skill to operate the instrument."

VICTORY brought about one of the great highs in the history of technology. Word of Bell's invention spread rapidly. Everyone wanted to see it, hear it, use it. Bell gave lecture-demonstrations that were front-page news. In England, he put on a special demonstration for Queen Victoria: in the Council Room at Osborne House, the monarch, with one of Bell's early phone receivers pressed to her ear, listened to a rather poor rendition of "God Save the Queen." Two days later, Sir Thomas Biddulph, her private secretary, wrote Bell to say that she was, in effect, blown away, and would like to buy the two phones used in the demonstration. The inventor sent her, as a gift, two other phones, made of ivory and trimmed in gold.

Squabbles over both foreign and domestic rights began immediately. (U.S. Patent 174,465, which had been formally awarded to Bell on March 10, 1876, was to be, in Mackay's words, "the most valuable single patent ever issued," and during the next eighteen years Hubbard, on Bell's behalf, fought off more than six hundred litigants, all wanting a part of the action.) Western Union, in one of the most impressively stupid business decisions in history, turned down the chance to buy all rights to the telephone for a hundred thousand dollars. Bell, guided chiefly by Hubbard, then formed the Bell Telephone Company, with several other partners, and his financial worries were over.

So were his domestic ones. He had put off his marriage to Mabel Hubbard until the telephone race was won. They finally married a year after his patent came through, and, as a wedding present, Bell turned all but ten of his fifteen hundred shares, or about one-third ownership of the Bell Telephone Company, over to his wife. He knew the want of money, he knew what money could do, but he seems to have been very little interested in it otherwise. His biographer remarks that he was never, technically, a multimillionaire. But before Bell was forty he and his wife had enough money to live exactly as they pleased. The couple, who had two daughters (two sons died in infancy), lived in grand homes in Washington, D.C., and in Nova Scotia, the latter one a mansion high on a hill overlooking the Bras d'Or Lakes. He indulged in foreign travel, in generosity to the intellectually deserving, and in his own (sometimes slightly whimsical) research—spending, for example, vast sums on monstrously large kites when he became interested in aviation.

DESPITE Bell's apparent happiness, not long after the triumph of the telephone his weight shot up from a hundred and sixty pounds to two hundred and fourteen. His hair began to turn prematurely white; he let his now white beard grow long. He and his father were often taken for brothers, and so they appear in photographs from this period. Alexander Graham Bell had a little problem: by the time he was thirty, he had achieved a success that he was unlikely ever to top, and he was well aware of it. But a spirit as energetic as Bell's could not be content to rest on past achievement. He wrote to his wife from Europe, "Make me work... at anything, it doesn't matter what, only make me work so that I may be accomplishing something."



Beginning in 1881, Bell put sixty thousand dollars into the founding of *Science*, the magazine that later became the official organ of the American Association for the Advancement of Science. Several years later, his father-in-law founded the National Geographic Society, and it was Bell's idea to make the society's publication, *The National Geographic Magazine*, more popular in style and to use photographs more lavishly, including its first photograph of a bare-breasted woman—a Filipina harvesting rice—which ran at Bell's insistence. After Hubbard's death, in 1897, Bell became the president of the society, and over the years wrote for the magazine, sometimes under the anagrammatic pen name of H. A. Largelamb.

He began paying stipends to young scientists whose work showed promise, among them Albert Michelson, the University of Chicago physicist who later won a Nobel Prize. The education of the deaf remained a continuing passion, and he engaged in a persistent battle over it with Edward Gallaudet, the director of the first national school for the deaf. Gallaudet believed that sign language should be the principal tool for teaching the deaf and that deaf students learned best from deaf teachers. Bell always favored a system of education that would integrate the deaf into the world of the hearing as closely as possible, in the way his own wife was fully integrated. He befriended Helen Keller with personal encouragement and financial aid, and she dedicated her autobiography to him.

Through all this, Bell's inventions continued to absorb him. In 1882, he made his great medical invention: he called it the "vacuum jacket," but it became better known as the iron lung. He helped perfect the gramophone, which Edison had recently invented. He worked on a hydrofoil boat; he became interested in helicopters; he bred sheep, with an eye to eugenic experiment, hoping to produce a twin-bearing breed; and, near the end of his life, hoping to aid shipwreck survivors, he struggled without success to find a way of

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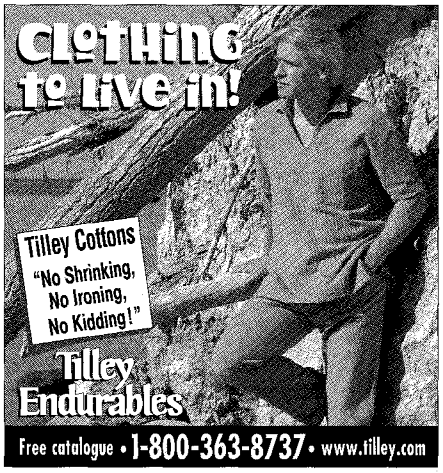

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converting sea fog into drinking water. His working day began at noon and finished at 4 A.M., and in Nova Scotia he often rambled alone through the countryside, thinking till dawn.

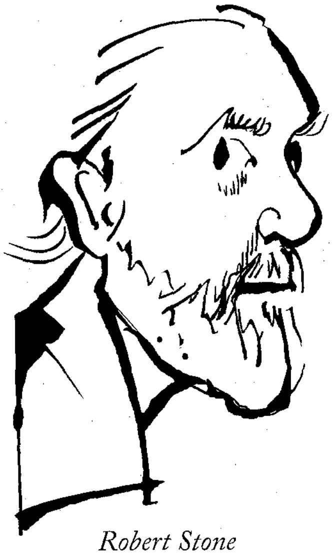
When Bell was in his seventies, he told a journalist, "There cannot be mental atrophy in any person who continues to observe, to remember what he observes, and to seek answers for his unceasing hows and whys about things." That worked for Bell, but then almost everything did. Wealth, great fame, astonishing achievement, the uncomplicated love of his family—all were his, and the truth seems to be that he deserved them. He was a remarkable man, good-hearted and honorable in every way. When he died, in 1922—of the effects of diabetes, at the age of seventy-five—his last words to his wife, informing her that he would never leave her, were in sign language.

Alexander Graham Bell's early ambitions for the telephone were visionary. He imagined intercontinental calls and lived to hear transcontinental ones. But not even he could have imagined the pervasive, predominant role that his invention would play in modern life. On August 4, 1922, the day of his funeral in Nova Scotia, all telephone communication in the United States was shut down in his honor, for one minute, at exactly 6:25 P.M. Try to recall that later this week when, at around the same time, you get another infuriating telemarketing call. ♦

THIS YEAR IN JERUSALEM

Robert Stone thrills to the Holy Land.

BY DAPHNE MERKIN



Robert Stone

CORNELIA VON SEIDLEIN

LEAVE it to a goy to write the definitive novel about Israel. Robert Stone, who has thus far trained his dark and kaleidoscopic sights on things American, now turns his gaze upon that ancient, racked land across the globe and brings its tensions and dilemmas into characteristically sharp focus. His new novel, "Damascus Gate" (Houghton Mifflin; $26), is so comprehending of Israel's convoluted workings and its bifurcated culture—where the Biblical fervor of Jerusalem coexists with the disco fever of Tel Aviv—that he makes other writers on the subject seem like the breeziest of literary tourists.

Most writers on Israel have been Jewish, naturally, and they've tended to follow a similar itinerary: check into the King David Hotel and grouse about the food; stroll the Old City, nervously noting Arab glares; meet Aharon Appelfeld or Amos Oz for coffee; pine for their dead grandparents and expired religious beliefs; and return home with a renewed sense of melancholic superiority. In fairness, it must be said that Bellow, Roth, Richler, et al. are not entirely to be blamed for their lack of immersion. There is something about the country that denies access even to the shrewdest and most persistent observers. It may be that it's too intense for its size—too peripheral a presence on the world stage to be casting such a giant shadow. Perhaps it's the unceasing Arab-Israeli conflict, or the paternalistic relationship America has maintained with the country since its establishment, fifty years ago, or Israel's growing insistence on defining itself autonomously rather than as an extension of Jewish identity politics or American geopolitical muscle. Perhaps Israel is a Rorschach test, and there is no clarity to be had, except on the Op-Ed page of the *Times*. Whatever the reason, this country has more often been seen in a projective blur of hope, nostalgia, disappointment—or, as is likely these days, disapproval—than in terms of its own tangled reality. Until now, that is. Until a lapsed Catholic with the travel bug and a gift for sniffing out the next paradigmatic human narrative (Stone was one of the first writers to see that the embers of Vietnam would continue to smolder in the counterculture of the seventies) decided to make a pilgrimage to the city of "timeless creeds" high up in the Judean hills.

What he has come back with is an existential thriller, set in Jerusalem in the early nineties. It is a time of more than usual instability, when the *intifada* (the organized Arab political outburst against the Israeli occupation of the West Bank and other disputed areas) has been declared, the jihad (the ongoing Islamic holy war against the Jews) has intensified, and Israelis are on the defensive. At the center of Stone's book lies "the idea of a great absconded Creator," which is, in some sense, the terrifying absence that beckons to be filled in all of his fiction. His theme, wherever it plays itself out—an unpicturesque New Orleans, the mountainous terrain of a fictional Central American country, the beaches of Baja, a Connecticut suburb—has always been the longing for transcendent meaning in a flattened, antiheroic world. (A reviewer in these pages once remarked that Stone "should stifle his tendency toward godly musings and carryings on"; the author seems to have paid him no mind.) Although the moral gravity of Stone's concerns has sometimes weighed oppressively on his characters, in their drugged-out or boozy quandaries, this time the writer and the situation are well matched. I don't know what led Stone to go to Jerusalem, but I suspect it had something to do with the city's lunatic allure—the way in which it uniquely embodies, as he writes, a "rage for ultimates." As anyone who has been there knows, it is difficult to walk very far in any direction in Jerusalem without feeling the heat of theological passions, be they Christian, Muslim, or Jewish in origin. "The city," Stone points out in the opening paragraph, "was well supplied with divine services."

"Damascus Gate" is a packed book; it's off and running almost from the first sentence, as though at the sound of an unheard bell. As we've come to expect from Stone's work, it brims over with plots, subplots, and an impressive array of incisively drawn characters of greater and lesser importance. His usual assets—his eye for passing flecks of detail, his ear for sophisticated, mordant dialogue—are in evidence. But he has stepped more firmly into his own idiom than ever before, leaving behind the many influences (Melville, Conrad, Greene, Chandler, Malcolm Lowry) that used to crowd his prose style. His protagonist, Christopher Lucas, is a vintage Stone leading man: unmarried, unmoored, and without much in the way of ordinary consolation. (Stone's alter egos have always avoided the safe confines of bourgeois existence, preferring to wander in the margins of their own unsettled lives; in his first novel, "A Hall of Mirrors" (1967), the main character, Rheinhardt, rides in a Greyhound bus and notes the "blank early morning houses—line after line of futile little lawns, bottles of milk on peeling steps, haunted chairs propped against the shingles.") Lucas is a middle-aged American with a long jaw and a receding hairline. "He was not a vain man," Stone writes in one of his straight-shooting observations, which then curve back on themselves to take the reader by surprise, "but his own appearance discouraged him."

A newspaper reporter who has written a book about the American invasion of Grenada and has impulsively decided to become a freelance journalist (he has contributed, we learn, to the *Times Magazine* and *Harper's*), Lucas is uncomfortable with his new circumstances: "It was constantly necessary to explain oneself. His calling cards impressed new acquaintances as somehow incomplete. Sometimes he felt like a dilettante. And as a freelance he had become less thrifty, less disciplined and more ambitious." Lucas has spent the last year or so (Stone is hazy about certain novelistic rudiments, like chronology) researching an assignment about the Sinai "for Condé Nast," which he has failed to deliver. He lingers on in Jerusalem, hoping to stumble upon another book subject, while pining after Nuala, a fiery Irish volunteer who's attracted to radical causes all over the map, the Arab-Israeli conflict being the latest. Lucas recognizes that he's not Nuala's type—he "was painfully aware that he had never been able to generate the degree of menace she seemed to require"—and actually lives with another woman, Tsillila, a kibbutznik who has published a novel and has since taken up film criticism (God help her). But he's the sort of chronically self-rejecting man who is more excited by the woman he can't have than by the one in his bed.

IN order to understand the atmosphere of millenarian frenzy that comes to engulf Lucas, however, one has to understand the real reason he has come to Jerusalem: to "cure himself" of "the fond, silly regard for religion" that was instilled in him in the Catholic grammar school he attended in Manhattan and led him to become a religion major in college. Lucas is the bastard son of a Gentile mother—"a sentimental Catholic"—and a father he describes as "a nonpracticing Jew"; he has been brought up to believe that his mixed spiritual lineage is an unmixed benediction. Despite a few rough moments—such as being called a "sheeny kike bastard" by a boy in his fourth-grade class—he has grown up with the vague conviction that it's "nice to have it all. To inherit on both sides of the street, the Shekhinah along with Mother Church and Irish oatmeal, the blessing *and* the porridge." In his pointedly nonjudgmental stance—he takes pride in seeing himself as "a man without a story, secure from tribal delusion"—he personifies the late-twentieth-century American liberal, and Stone, without wielding any ideological cudgels, gently beats out the dusty pieties of his position. Underneath the cultivated ecumenism of Lucas's outlook, he remains unsettled by his hybrid heritage. In the course of the novel, he is regularly asked if he's Jewish, and he generally hedges, sometimes ironically and sometimes not. The first time this question is put to him, he answers, "with underconfident primness," "My family is of mixed background." Stone adds, "He thought it might make him sound a little like Wittgenstein. In fact, what mixed had not quite been a family. More of a fuck." And although he believes that he has put his yearning for religious faith behind him, he's the sort of person who, when he meets a woman he really likes, asks, "Do you believe in God?"

Fittingly, Lucas drifts into a collaboration with an Israeli psychiatrist on a book about the Jerusalem Syndrome—a real-life form of religious mania which afflicts a small number of Christian visitors to the city, who become convinced that they're on a sacred mission to herald the Second Coming. The doctor, Pinchas Obermann, is a red-bearded deprogrammer with a dry wit: "He was that rare thing," Obermann says of an infamous sufferer from the syndrome, "a schizophrenic with manners." Lucas is attracted to the book project because, on the face of it, it "seemed interesting, relatively safe and personally congenial," but on a less conscious level it is the perfect way for him to remain a professional student of religion. Lucas doesn't realize—and the reader will fully realize only hundreds of pages of meticulously plotted encounters later—that this innocuous decision will place him in the middle of a byzantine scheme to blow up the mosques on Jerusalem's Temple Mount. Through Obermann's contacts and through his own increasingly obsessive research (at one point he begins to think that "he himself suffered from the Jerusalem Syndrome"), Lucas meets a variety of people—Jewish extremists, Christian fundamentalists, and cross-cultural misfits—all of whom are somehow involved with the deadly intrigue. Most significant among them are the biracial Sonia Barnes, who has left a job checking coats at an Upper East Side restaurant to come to Israel and pursue her interest in Sufism and jazz singing; Raziel Melker, the druggie son of wealthy Midwesterners, who was a yeshiva student, a Zen monk, a musician, and a member of a Hebrew-Christian commune before taking up spiritual hustling; Adam De Kuff, a Southern Jew "turned goy," who is given to "fits of weeping" and is chosen by Raziel to be a messianic leader; and Dr. Gordon Lestrade, an anti-Semitic archeologist whose specialty is Biblical sites. A well-drawn cast of extras—the ex-wife of a Christian-fundamendalist minister, a Polish journalist with thousands of sources and a dozen passports, an aging skinhead from Glasgow who's employed as a hotel chef—pass in and out of conversations and scenes, thickening the novel's texture. And just when you think you've worked out how everything links up, Stone throws in a new person or incident to scramble the picture again.

The whirligig of events does grow tiring at times, as does the endless succession of Jabotinsky revisionists, Gush Emunim right-wingers, Peace Now leftists, and American know-it-alls who hurl ideas, convictions, and misconceptions at each other in Jerusalem haunts like Fink's, in a Tel Aviv night club called Mister Stanley's, and everywhere in between, from a Palestinian refugee camp in the Gaza Strip to a monastery church in Haifa. But right up till the end, when the machinery of the story is so overworked that it has smoke coming out of it and you can no longer remember who is on what side and why, much less who has been quoting Pascal or the Zohar to whom, you keep reading. The tension in "Damascus Gate" is finally sustained not by the ant-farm-like motion of the characters but by their inner agitation. How do you make sense of a life? Stone poses this question with force and ingenuity. "Everyone wanted an answer, a guide for the perplexed," Lucas muses. "Everyone wanted death and suffering to mean something." By the time he goes home, having barely made it out alive, he is resigned to the possibility that the "circular darkness" of history offers no more than glimpses of illumination, and concludes that "a thing is never truly perceived, appreciated or defined except in longing."

ROBERT STONE has always been good at locating the shadow region where paranoia meets reasonable fear, and in the hyperventilating Jerusalem of "Damascus Gate" he has found an almost perfect laboratory in which to tease out these different conditions and the ways in which they become entwined. He belongs to the man's man tradition of novelists who treat the world as their playground—who are at ease with large canvases and panoramic vistas. One senses that, had they but drugs enough and time, his characters would try on experiences until there were none left. With Stone, though, it's not merely the Hemingwayesque appetite for pure adventure that keeps his characters on the move—looking, arguing, remembering snatches of Mahler or Sarah Vaughan, quoting what they've read, forever culling information—but a metaphysical hunger. Lucas, like other Stone characters before him, is on a quest for the moral authenticity that he's sure must still be lurking somewhere in the corners of the visible world. This quest brings him to the last bastion of spiritual too-muchness, where the California state of mind—the "no there there" problem that Stone has hammered away at elsewhere—yields to a rabbinic perspective: "Life was so self-conscious in Jerusalem, so lived at close quarters, by competing moralizers." Lucas is "a collector of obscure lore," and so is Stone, who dropped out of high school to join the Navy and has the unjaded curiosity of a true autodidact. There is no fact or angle, however abstruse or far-fetched—buried somewhere in Abulafia, Eckehart, or Böhme—that he doesn't notice and stop to consider. The range of his knowledge is spectacular, and he stretches his novels to contain both sides of every debate, as though he were conducting a Talmud class for the secular and the wary. (Thus we get to meet an American rabbi who crisply rejects a discussion of wandering souls with the remark "I have no interest in Kabbala. It's medieval superstition. And I distrust, shall we say, the lingo.") Indeed, Stone is something like an ideal Jew: reverent in the face of book knowledge, on personal terms with the ineffable, seduced but never cowed by the possibility that God is hanging around somewhere off Ben Yehuda Street. He seems to have found out everything there is to know about Israel, and then some. The sheer informedness of the book is perhaps what's most remarkable about it—the way that Stone has penetrated this obdurate country and absorbed its emotional tone. At moments, he seems so eerily to have insinuated himself into Israel-think—Lucas, on sighting some German tourists, automatically calculates how old they are and how old (and therefore how accountable) they were during the Nazi era—that it's hard to believe he wasn't born there or hasn't lived there for years. Perhaps he has, in another life, or will in the life to come. ♦

BRIEFLY NOTED

NOBODY'S GIRL, by Antonya Nelson (Scribners; $22). "Why are all these stories and poems so de*pressing*?" the vastly pregnant, beautiful Luziana asks her high-school English teacher, Birdy Stone. Stranded at seven thousand feet in Pinetop, New Mexico, Birdy is more like a fish out of water than like her animal namesake. Nelson, whose perfectionism in this deftly plotted novel is both rigorous and delightful, has constructed in feckless Birdy a character whose life proceeds in fits and starts, by dream logic: it's the responsibility of answering Luziana that finally pulls her back into the swim.

THE MEADOWLANDS, by Robert Sullivan (Scribners; $23). If Walt Whitman decided to get his Nature badge by paddling a canoe past a series of garbage dumps, the ensuing tale might resemble this fascinating book. The Meadowlands is the enormous, forbidding New Jersey marsh that hosts some of the earth's biggest landfills, sundry professional sports teams, the remains of Penn Station, and, according to persistent legend, the corpse of Jimmy Hoffa. Its neglected—and often reviled—landmarks have names like Snake Hill and Point-No-Point, and they are populated by octogenarian treasure-hunters, feuding environmentalists, wading egrets, and untold swarms of thirsty mosquitoes.

LANDSCAPES OF THE HEART, by Elizabeth Spencer (Random House; $24). The theme of this splendid memoir is the novelist's conflicted relation to her native South. Spencer grew up in a small town in Mississippi when rigidities and intimacies that have long since vanished seemed everlasting. In 1942, she went on to study at Vanderbilt, in Nashville, and became part of a galaxy of Southern writers nurtured there. She also documents her romances with New York and Italy, but Spencer remained bound to the South throughout her life, and she lives there now. Elegant in style and profound in feeling, this book is both literary history and literature.

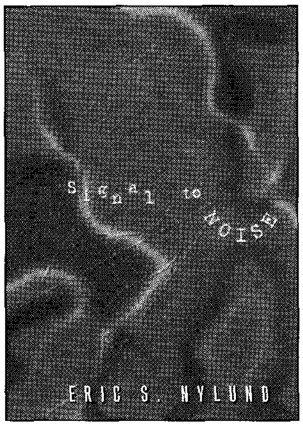
MAYOR CORNING, by Paul Grondahl (Washington Park; $36). In America, there's nobody more powerful than a powerful city boss—so much is made clear by this exquisitely detailed biography of Albany's Erastus Corning II. An aristocrat with the common touch, Corning was the longest-serving mayor in American history, and one of the last great machine politicians. Like Robert Caro's "The Power Broker," this biography centers on a protean patrician who came into his own in the rough-and-tumble of urban politics, and Grondahl evokes his subject with novelistic assurance.

RED-TAILS IN LOVE, by Marie Winn (Pantheon; $24). This is as much the story of the bird-watchers of Central Park as it is of the objects of their obsession: the pair of red-tailed hawks that nested on the façade of a Fifth Avenue building opposite the model-boat pond, and succeeded in raising a family on the Upper East Side. Casting her story as a drama in four acts, Winn, who writes about bird-watching for the *Wall Street Journal*, makes a spirited case for anthropomorphism.

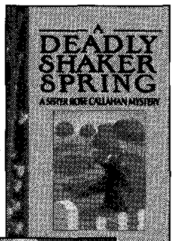
(Advt.)

We are presently cruising through the month that the poet T.S. Eliot dubbed "the cruelest." But a notable trio of fictional works may soften April's blows.

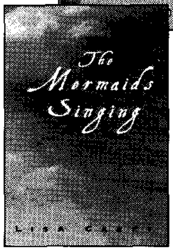
Author **Eric Nylund** has created a new sub-genre of speculative fiction—"hyperpunk"—and a new novel with which to demonstrate its power and originality: ***SIGNAL TO NOISE***. This is science fiction for the next millennium, where the boundary separating reality from virtual reality is wherever we wish to draw it. Nylund's cautionary tale concerns the private dealings—some legal, some otherwise—of an ambitious computer cryptographer-for-hire whose discovery of a message from the stars hidden in the hiss of background radiation promises to have staggering, and perhaps lethal, social and economic consequences for himself, his world and the governments and multinational corporations that control it. This is both a novel of dark ironies as relevant to our present as to our future, and the bright dawn of an exciting new brand of fictional extrapolation.



No society—no matter how peaceful and self-contained—is totally immune to the evil that men and women do. ***A DEADLY SHAKER SPRING*** is a new mystery by **Deborah Woodworth** that concerns a malicious campaign of mayhem—up to and including murder—perpetrated upon members of a truly unique American religious community: the Shakers of the earlier half of our century. Following the investigation of the devout and determined Sister Rose Callahan into a series of shocking—and ultimately fatal—hate crimes, we experience a world and a lifestyle most of us could never have fathomed otherwise. And we are treated to a smart and perplexing puzzle as well.



THE MERMAIDS SINGING is the story of three generations of Irish and Irish-American women, set on an island where myth is as powerful as truth. **Lisa Carey**'s debut is a novel about love and resentment between mothers and daughters; about the heartbreak of being torn between two worlds and the search for a place to call home.



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THE THEATRE

PRESENT ABSENCES

Ionesco's whirlwind of emptiness, and Saturn in New York.

BY JOHN LAHR

Once, contemplating the survival of his plays, the French-Romanian playwright Eugène Ionesco said, "It takes a few decades for a work to become brilliant—when it's no longer written by the author, but rewritten by the generations who come after him." Britain's Théâtre de Complicité has restaged Ionesco's one-act "The Chairs" nearly half a century after it was written, in 1952, and has established finally and forever the indubitable poetry and genius of the play, which Ionesco subtitled "a tragic farce." Here, at the Golden, superbly directed by Simon McBurney and aided by the Quay Brothers' water-stained gray-plank surround of towering doors and cornices, Ionesco's ontological void takes the shape of a floating, threadbare island world "on the edge of nothingness," in which two nonagenarians—played by the English comic veterans Richard Briers and Geraldine McEwan—act out the folly, fulminations, and fierce solitude of their dwindling days. The production plunges the audience into a vivid, contradictory world of light and darkness, proliferation and absence. Ionesco originally saw an image of ever-increasing chairs on an empty stage—what he called "present absences"—as a vision of "total absence." The great accomplishment of the Complicité's production is to capture the pulse of the feverish anxiety out of which he wrote—the sense of a metabolism gone haywire, and of what Ionesco referred to as a whirlwind of accumulating emptiness.

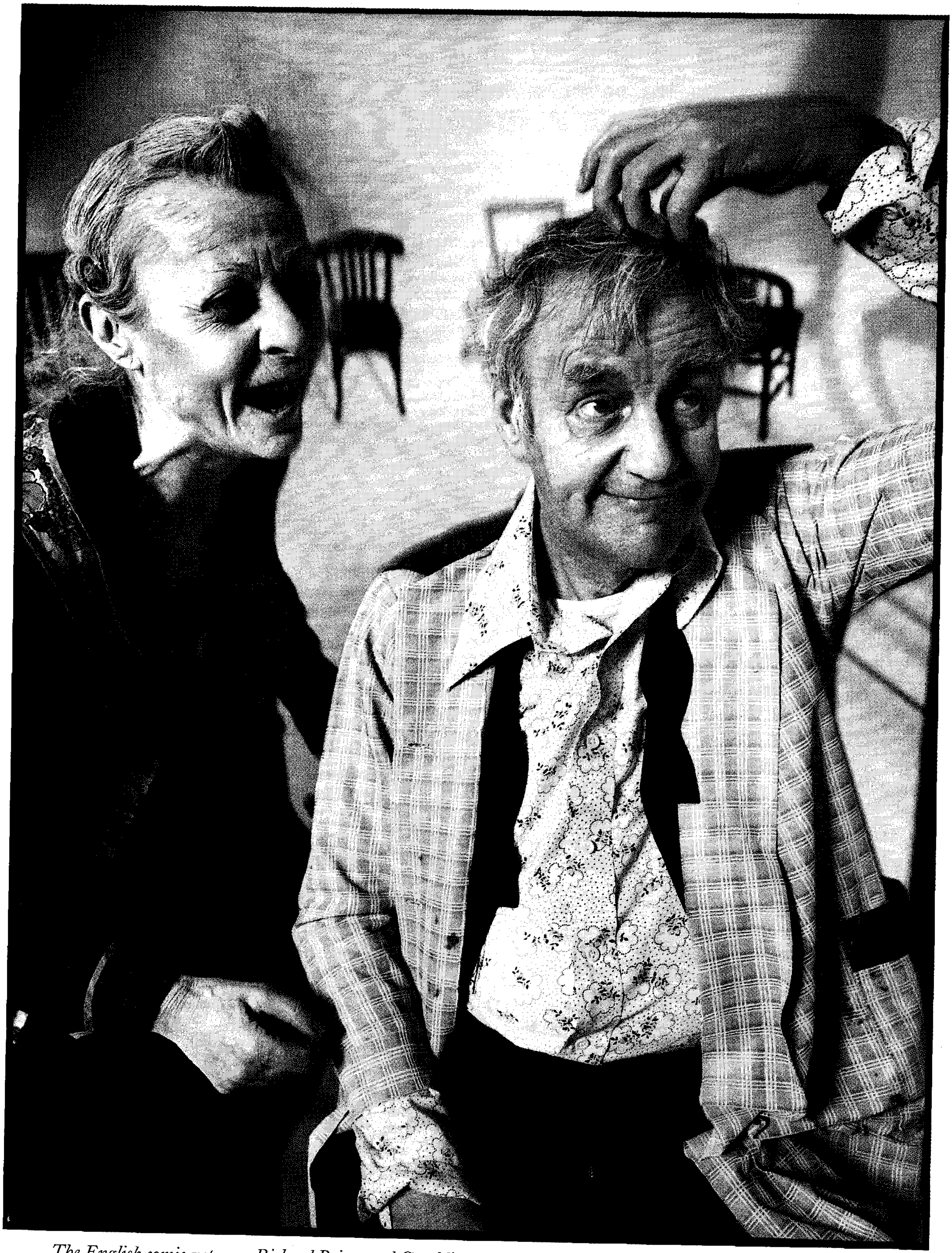
A large part of the play's new shine is a result of the fine playing of Briers and McEwan, who know all there is to know about comic timing. At the opening of the show, Briers, white-haired and feeble, stands at the window, casting a hangdog look at the watery vastness just outside his front door. The play's first words establish the corrupted world they inhabit: "Please—poppet—shut the window. You're letting the stench of stagnant water in." The Old Man thinks he's seeing boats "like sunspots" in the distance. "There aren't any little boats," the Old Woman says. "There isn't any sun. It's night-time, popsey." The Old Man counters, "There's still the afterglow." It's a terrific joke. They can't agree on what is in the world; nonetheless, nostalgia for it prevails. This is the precise emotional affliction that inspired Ionesco's plays. "I write out of anguish; out of nostalgia . . . a nostalgia which no longer knows its object," he once said. The Old Man and the Old Woman tell each other stories to agree on their history and to keep their insubstantial selves intact. "Your story is my story too," the Old Woman says to the Old Man, and at one point she suggests, "Why don't you 'be' something to cheer us up?" The Old Man replies, "Why don't *you* 'be' something—it's your turn," and they fall into a vaudeville of recrimination:

> Old Woman: Oh no it's not.
> Old Man: Oh yes it is.
> Old Woman: Isn't.
> Old Man: Is.

Their folderol exudes the distinctive perfume of despair. Later, after being told that he "could've achieved something in life," Briers ends up on McEwan's lap, regressing. "I want my mummy," he says. "Where's my mummy? I'm an orphan." The air is full of regrets and abdications. Grandiosity vies with self-loathing. The Old Man feels compelled to give the world his message; the Old Woman, always the supportive wife, says, "Mankind is waiting. The universe hangs on your lips." A party to broadcast his views is called for that night. An Orator is hired to insure the proper delivery of his message, and before you can say "Hey, Feydeau!" the event, and what Ionesco called "the mechanics of proliferation," gets under way.

Chairs are brought into the room for the imaginary newcomers, and Ionesco's fun machine goes quickly out of control. McEwan turns into a roadrunner, skittering around the stage with chairs in her hands, over her head, collapsing hilariously with her body slumped against the door. Chairs are shoved through the doors, dropped from the ceiling, popped onto cornices. As the old couple go through their social paces with each guest, including the resplendently invisible King of Kings Himself (a spotlight follows His Invisibleness around the auditorium to the place where he resides, beside a pair of white gloves on the balcony railing), their badinage compounds clutter with cliché. The play, well translated by Martin Crimp, is a virtual encyclopedia of dead phrases, which has the weird comic effect of turning language, too, into emptiness. "You can find yourself looking at things that seem to be mere appearances, expressions of nothing, faces with nothing behind them," Ionesco said, and this proliferating nothingness is what the play both literally and symbolically achieves.

At a certain speed, all things disintegrate: in "The Chairs" the exhausted old couple, separated by the crowd, finally commit suicide by jumping into the sea out of opposite windows. It's left to the ghostly Orator (Mick Barnfather) to deliver the message; inevitably, words escape him. He's deaf and dumb; he speaks in sign language and, finally, in frustration, writes the following punning statements on the doors: "ANGELSWEEP" and "GOD™ISAGONE." In the final coup de théâtre, McBurney actually stages Ionesco's "whirlwind of emptiness." The house appears to be blown away: the doors collapse, the scrim flies up, and the set becomes a gray, skeletal shell, like some bombed war ruin. But Ionesco has one last, chilling laugh. After a few moments of silence, the sound of murmuring laughter and conversation wells up underneath the chairs. As the lights fade, a stationary chair turns in our direction. In that startling moment—not scripted by Ionesco—the production teases one final caprice from ob-



The English comic veterans Richard Briers and Geraldine McEwan, as the Old Man and the Old Woman, act out a vaudeville of recrimination and despair in "The Chairs," Ionesco's tragic farce. Photograph by Max Vadukul.

livion: a theatrical illusion within a universe that to Ionesco was all illusion.

THERE'S nothing illusory about the musical talent of Adam Guettel in "Saturn Returns: A Concert" (at the Public), which, incidentally, marks the composer's return to the New York theatre scene after an auspicious 1996 début with "Floyd Collins." We'll have to wait until 1999 to see "Floyd Collins" again in New York (the final stop of a four-city tour); in the meantime, "Saturn Returns," astutely directed by Guettel's longtime collaborator Tina Landau, shows off his gift for melody and offers a tempting glimpse of a major talent to look forward to. The evening, a nineteen-song cyle, is a kind of musical grab bag; it is ostensibly based on Greek myths and Protestant hymns but is actually a scintillating piece of musical autobiography that explores Guettel's fractured sense of self. His dashing abilities as both composer and lyricist are sounded from the first beat of the cycle's first song: "Long ago I tasted something sweet./It's an echo, it's a memory/In retreat."

Out of this sense of absence ("My twenties had kind of worn me down," he explains in the program), the thirty-four-year-old Guettel uses gnarly, gorgeous contrapuntal rhythms to weave a complex landscape of longing. The songs bear witness to his spiritual yearnings and to the passion to be released from emptiness and from exhaustion. In "Icarus," which begins "Icarus was not an achiever/Always resented what his father could do," Guettel writes about the weight of ambition and his fury at expectations. "When would he ever make his mark?" the chorus sings. Icarus ponders the prospect of "unlimited altitude," and adds, "Nimbus cloud about my head/I think I'll wear it in my father's stead." Guettel, who is the grandson of Richard Rodgers and the son of Mary Rodgers, has lived his life in the heady ozone of accomplishment, and has all the moves of a first-rate talent; he is ready for the big musical challenges, if he's willing to meet them. His swinging setting of the hymn "Light After Darkness" is a jubilant, ravishing musical climax to the spiritual wandering and emotional difficulty his songs describe:

Sweet after bitter.
Song after fears.
Home after wandering
Praise after tears. ♦

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ACROSS
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8 KNEW (*nu* hom.)
9 US + HER
10 REIN + VENT
12 (s)CRIB(e)
14 SIGH (*Cy* hom.)
15 S(T)URGEON
17 TAC + KY (*cat* rev.)
18 HEM + P
19 ODYSSEAN (hidden)

DOWN
1 BLUR + B.S.
2 ROSE (2 defs.)
3 D(R)ENCH
4 IN + TERSE + CT
5 TENNIS (anag.)
6 T + WIT
7 THIN + GUMMY
11 P + I + TIED
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13 B(ANY)AN
15 SOHO (hidden in initial letters)
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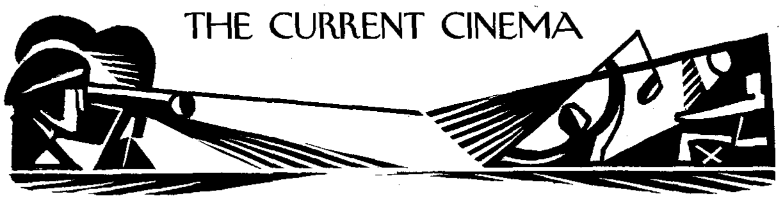


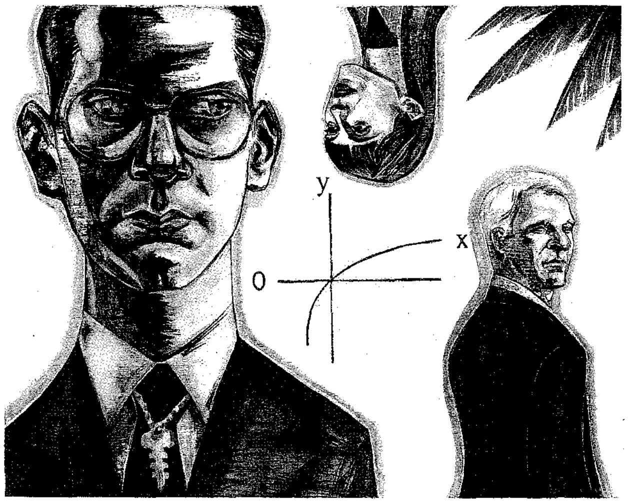
THE CURRENT CINEMA

IN THE KNOW

David Mamet cons us again.

BY ANTHONY LANE

HALF an hour into "The Spanish Prisoner," the heroine turns to the hero and asks, "Who is what they seem? Who in this world is what they seem?" Sadly, the answer to that question is "Almost everybody," but it is the privilege of movies to pretend otherwise—to baffle us with characters who change their identities as often as their underwear. One leading purveyor of such deceit is David Mamet, whose films tend to feel more elusive than his pumped-up work for the stage: his plays are bulls, but his movies slip through your fingers like eels.



Campbell Scott, Rebecca Pidgeon, and Steve Martin in "The Spanish Prisoner": casual but suspect transactions.

"The Spanish Prisoner" is Mamet's fifth venture as writer and director, and it revisits the shadowlands that he traversed in "House of Games" and "Homicide." Campbell Scott stars as Joe Ross, a young inventor who has come up with something called the Process. The nameless company that Joe works for will, by virtue of the Process, "control the global market," according to his colleague George Lang (Ricky Jay). All this is left deliberately grand and vague; the uncharitable view would be that Mamet hasn't bothered to research the fiefdoms of big business and industrial espionage, but my guess is that he wanted the background to hang heavy, like the looming institutions that bedevil a Kafka hero. When Joe is asked to predict how much profit the Process will make, he says, "A conservative projection is that we're going to generate for the company a windfall of something on the order of," and he writes a figure on the blackboard. We do not see that figure. Joe is like a gentleman who picks up the tab and refuses to let us glimpse the damage; money is a dirty secret, so the least one can do is act clean.

Not that "The Spanish Prisoner" is unfriendly to exactitude. Its attention, indeed, is skewed toward people of no apparent interest and objects of no particular worth: a pair of spectacles, a torn old book. When Joe's fellow-employee Susan (Rebecca Pidgeon) stops by with a bag of goodies from her local bakery, watches him prepare to cut them up, and remarks, "Nice knife," you fear the worst. It's like Janet Leigh saying how much she admires your bathroom fittings. And when Joe, on a working trip to the Caribbean, takes a photograph on the beach, a stranger named Jimmy Dell (Steve Martin) offers him a thousand dollars for his cheap plastic camera. Later, the two of them have a drink, and, shortly before Joe returns to New York, Jimmy asks him to deliver a package. It's precisely the sort of transaction—casual but suspect, with a trembling capacity for tipping the balance of

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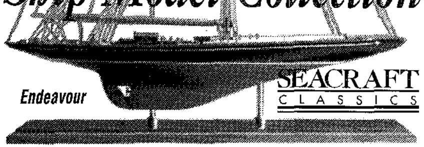

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power—that Mamet loves to drop into his plots; Joe is doing Jimmy a favor, simple as that, but he is also under the obligation to do it right.

From here on, needless to say, everything goes wrong, and the movie starts to sweat. Jimmy gets mad, apologizes, takes Joe out to dinner, questions him lightly about his job; Joe admits that he fears he will be inadequately rewarded for his invention; Jimmy offers to help. This is all aboveboard, but Mamet—a connoisseur of the great American con—gives the impression that there is fast work going on beneath the table. In "House of Games" he took us for a ride in the first half hour, and then encouraged us to believe that we couldn't, and wouldn't, fall for that kind of stunt again. Big mistake. There's no such double whammy in "The Spanish Prisoner," which prefers the slow, choking buildup of paranoia: the certainty that all is not well creeps into the movie like a lick of smoke under your bedroom door. Helping Mamet stoke the fear are the composer Carter Burwell, whose ominous, exotic score has a thump as soft and rhythmical as a pulse, and the director of photography, Gabriel Beristain. In an interview for this month's *American Cinematographer* Beristain said that he used medium lenses to film the various faces: "We had thought about using 200-mm. and 300-mm. lenses for a lot of the closeups, but we were afraid that might provide clues about the characters' true natures." God forbid.

This intense desire to keep one's distance is at the core of Mamet's filmmaking. You don't sense it in his efficient, brazen scripts for pictures like "The Untouchables," but, once he gets behind the camera, the people in front of it begin to hit the famous beat of Mamet-speak, with its unfazed continuo and its weirdly dogged repeats. Joe Mantegna was the most skillful soloist, but Rebecca Pidgeon—Mamet's wife—is becoming expert at the gnomic naïveté of his patter. "You never know who anybody is," Susan says, no fewer than three times, and the extent to which this bald announcement may or may not be true is far less interesting than the zombie stiffness with which she utters it. At first, I always tell myself that Mamet's films are badly acted, but, gradually, as the stories take hold, I find myself sliding, rather like the performers, into a cold, contagious trance.

Until last year, I had never properly registered Campbell Scott; he is one of those unfortunate stars who are condemned by their own good looks to play dullish leading men. And then, without warning, Scott gave us "Big Night," which he co-directed, with Stanley Tucci, and to which he contributed a pin-sharp cameo as a candy-sucking car salesman. Suddenly, Scott looked wry and astute, and it's slightly disappointing that "The Spanish Prisoner" has returned him to the doldrums. His Joe Ross is a dope and a dupe, and the film's conceit demands that he, the man who made the Process, should be stupid enough to tumble into a trap. To give Scott credit, he gets around this with an inspired reaction shot: as Joe finally gathers what has happened to him, he neither curses nor collapses but simply allows himself the light despair of a quarter-smile, as if turning his face to the sun. You can guess what he's thinking: I thought *I* was smart, but this . . .

"The Spanish Prisoner" is not Mamet's cleverest film, partly because his earlier work has schooled us in the art of foreseeing the twist. But it's the most seductive, summoning the audience to a place that resembles modern capitalist society yet feels and sounds more like a netherworld guided by shamanistic rites. (Spot the difference, Mamet would say.) It also has the knack of amusing us without ever being very funny: "Keep a sense of humor," an F.B.I. agent says to the beleaguered Joe, more in hope than in expectation. This itchy sensation that comedy lies a fraction beyond our fingertips is ideal for Steve Martin. Jimmy Dell is a straight role, and Martin plays it straight, but you are nagged by the thought that Jimmy is fooling with Joe, and with the rest of us, not in the interests of profit but in the service of some vastly intricate joke. I have watched Martin in recent years, in shockers like "Sgt. Bilko" and "Father of the Bride," and seen the dying fall of boredom behind his eyes. For David Mamet, he looks perky, mean, inquisitive, and as suave as a cat. Only a grouch would ask someone of Martin's genius to give up gags, but "The Spanish Prisoner" offers him the chance to hit a higher gear and to see where his watchful mania—the obsessiveness of the natural-born comic—will take him next. You never know who anybody is. ♦

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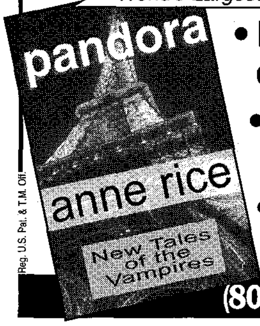

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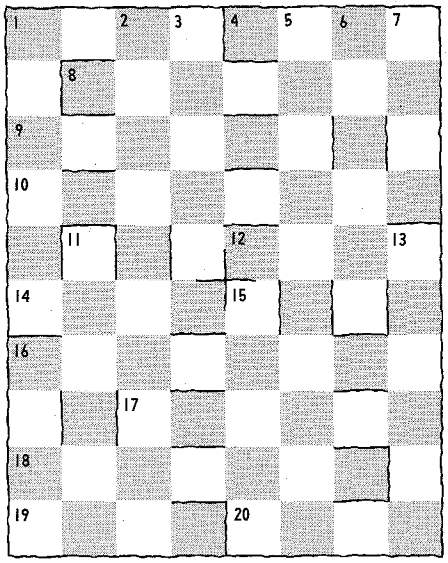
NO. 40 BY FRASER SIMPSON



ACROSS

1 Are thuccethful in thchool? Way to go (4)
4 Mountain climber's challenge upset pals (4)
8 Count CD Laura damaged (7)
9 Letters from so boisterous a musician (6)
10 Hardly celebrating day's beginning, we hear (8)
12 Rotate chin a short distance (4)
14 Shame about Ursula's front tooth (4)
16 Submissive, like a prayer worthy of confirmation? (8)
17 Request a r-ring (6)
18 Severely reduced spending adopted by Yale after reorganization (7)
19 Immediately, ten invested in volleyball equipment (4)
20 Small top didn't stay in place (4)

DOWN

1 Reminder: dance with Barnum (6)
2 Philosopher wears Texas outfits not given to a single woman (10)
3 Hot light causing anxiety (5)
5 Ellen built new Lloyd's of London ringer (6,4)
6 Physics Nobelist set parameters for one hundred thousand dollars (6)
7 In Paris, blood provided evidence (4)
11 Abrasive stuff turned up on computer attachments (6)
13 Was tipping followed closely? (6)
15 Music-store purchases a pet's chewed up (5)
16 Alda is being held by Jessica Lange (4)

• •

The solution to puzzle No. 39 appears on page 80. For a free copy of "The New Yorker's Guide to Solving Cryptic Crosswords," please send your fax number or a stamped, self-addressed envelope to "Solvers' Guide," The New Yorker, 20 West 43rd Street, New York, N.Y. 10036. For an electronic version, send an email to puzzleguide@newyorker.com.

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BY STEVE MARTIN

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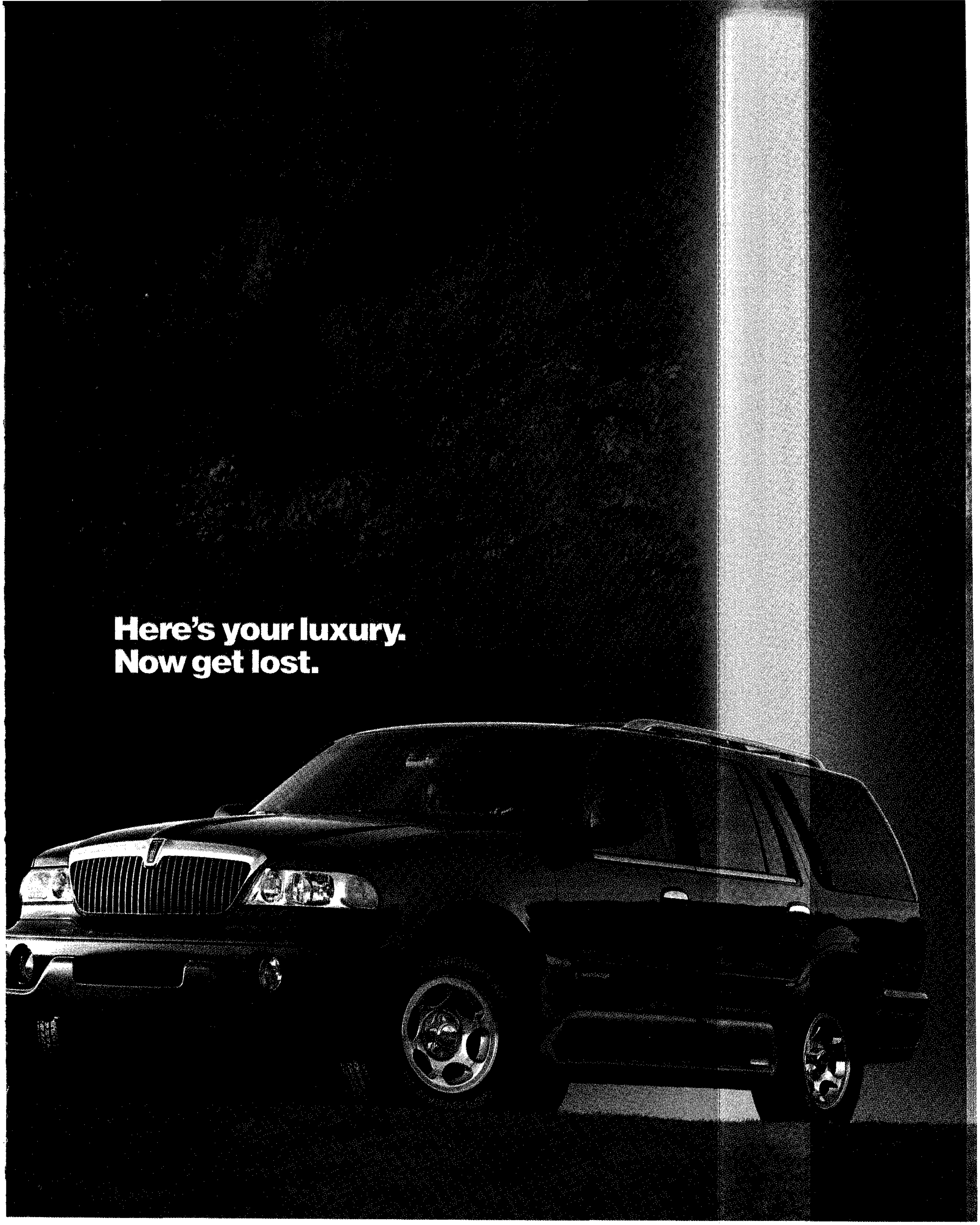

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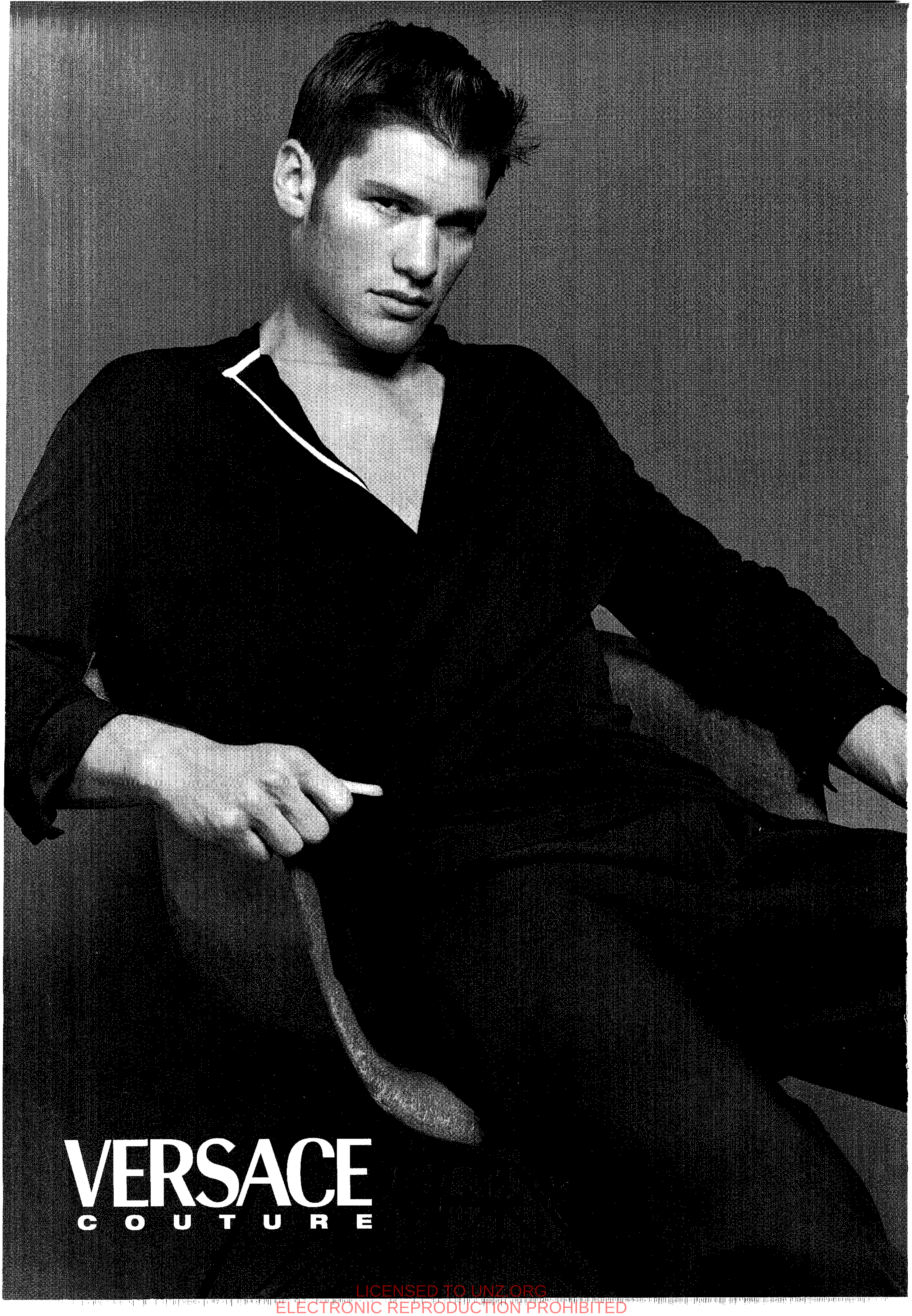

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